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Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab: Arab League Satisfied With Cease-Fire Agreement

NC2604213996 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2045 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 26 Apr (MENA)—The Arab League has expressed its satisfaction over the cease-fire agreement in Lebanon. It praised the steadfastness of the Lebanese people and their resistance to the Israeli aggression, which continued for over 16 days.

A statement issued by the Arab League Secretariat reaffirms the need for Israel to implement the paragraphs of the agreement in letter and spirit.

The statement stresses that the Israeli forces' withdrawal from the rest of the occupied Arab territories in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 425, 424 and 338, and the principle of land for peace contribute to peace and stability in the Middle East and to bolstering the peace process.

The statement salutes the Lebanese people, around whom the masses of the Arab homeland from the ocean to the gulf rallied during the Israeli aggression. In addition, the international community supported their just cause.

Inter-Arab: Arab League Cleaving to 'Strategic' Objective

MM2604152096 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 26 Apr 96 p 5

[Report by Sawsan Abu-Husayn in Cairo: "'Abd-al-Majid Denies That Aggression Against Lebanon Is Prelude to Israeli Attack on Syria"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In an exclusive statement to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid has ruled out suggestions that the Israeli aggression against Lebanon may be a "rehearsal" for a strike against Syria. He said that "Israel is now in a difficult situation and is trying to extricate itself from Lebanon, because its aggression is affecting its policies worldwide, especially since the world's states have rejected the Israeli irresponsible actions."

The Arab League secretary general said that the Arab joint defense agreement was not activated to confront Israel's attacks on southern Lebanon because of the Arab states' desire to preserve peace in the region. He said that "activating this agreement would bring back the climate of war to the region, would not serve anyone's interests, and would only cause more ruin and devastation."

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid went on: "This does not mean that there is an Arab blessing for the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. This is an unacceptable action which will result in major losses for Israel, preventing it from achieving its objectives." He said that the resumption of the negotiations and dialogue was more important than war, reprisal, violence, and counter-violence. On the reasons for not convening the Arab Defense Council for nearly 15 years, the Arab League secretary general said that "the member states have not asked for it to convene."

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said that the League's move with respect to confronting the Israeli aggression stemmed from the principles adopted by the Arab states and the consensus on establishing peace in the Middle East as a strategic rather than a tactical objective. It was a position that had caused embarrassment for both the United States and the Israeli Government. He added that this Arab position had reaffirmed to the whole world that the cost of preserving peace in the region was high and that it required all sides to make sacrifices.

On the possibility of a limited Arab summit's being held to rescue the peace process, 'Abd-al-Majid said that "Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali is actively pursuing contacts in this context. Some states announced their acceptance during the Arab League Council's opening emergency session held at foreign-minister level to examine the Israeli aggression against Lebanon." He went on: "Egypt, Libya, and Sudan have announced their acceptance. In addition, following his recent meeting with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal has confirmed that Saudi Arabia does not object to this summit or to participating in it. Bahrain has also announced that its supports holding an Arab summit, but contacts are still going on, and the summit date has not been decided yet."

On the Arab League's attempts to prevent the escalation of the sanctions against Libya, the call to review the file of the Lockerbie crisis, and attempts to find a way out of the current impasse, the secretary general said that he had sent messages to UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus-Ghali and to the OAU and that there was a move in several directions to find the appropriate solution to avoid escalating the situation against Libya.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid ruled out the possibility that the United States would launch a surprise air strike against Libya, saying that this was only speculation.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: PNC Issues Final Statement

JN2604143696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1110 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Text of final "political statement" issued by the Palestine National Council at the end of its 21st session in Gaza on 26 April—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] After 30 years of struggle, the PLO established the first Palestinian National Authority [PNA] on the liberated land of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The dearly beloved flag of Palestine flew high in the air over our cities, villages, and camps to announce to the world that the Palestinian people, who were exposed to the ugliest injustice in history, have begun returning to their homeland in order to play their cultural and social role, to make their own history, and to determine their own fate—a role they were deprived for half a century. They also suffered from occupation, displacement, coercive exile, and attempts to obliterate their national identity.

After 31 years, the Palestine National Council [PNC] returned to the liberated homeland and held its 21st session, turning over a new, brilliant leaf in the history of the Palestinian people in order to build their National Authority in the land of Palestine with a solid nucleus and a strong basis for the independent state of Palestine with holy Jerusalem as its capital.

The return of President Yasir 'Arafat and the vanguards of our forces to the homeland on 1 July 1994 was a decisive and historic turning point in the lives of our people. Palestinians from all over the homeland took to the streets to welcome the leader and the symbol of their brother struggler Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat]. Those days are unforgettable, eternal ones during which the world witnessed the adherence of the Palestinian people to their freedom, independence, and the PLO, their sole legitimate representative.

In a unique phenomenon, the PLO began to lay the foundations of the PNA from nothing, and our Palestinian people, who have been the permanent source of sacrifice, rallied around their newborn authority by extending unlimited support and assistance to the leader of their revolution and the men who have carried the trust and have returned to the homeland under the flag of Palestine.

In record time, the PLO established the pillars of the PNA on national soil. The Palestinian people proved that they are worthy of freedom and national independence. By their awareness and unity, our people defeated the losing wagers and unhesitatingly began their journey of tireless work and construction. Skeptical voices died down and both friend and foe had to acknowledge the PNA's ability to provide security, order, and stability.

The PNC Resolutions:

— A resolution on the formation and consolidation of the PNA: The PNC stresses that establishing and consolidating the PNA, which is the central link in the national independence program, is the key and primary mission of the Palestinian people and the forces, factions, and parties that rally around the PLO banner. The ongoing atmosphere and policies of the occupation, the attempts to separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip, and the heavy challenges, difficulties, obstacles, and fabricated events placed in the path of the PNA are aimed at undermining our objective of achieving independence and establishing an independent Palestinian state.

The success of the Palestinian people and their forces in creating and consolidating the PNA is a basic condition for completing the mission of withdrawing the Israeli troops and enhancing and developing the newborn Palestinian national entity into an independent Palestinian state with holy Jerusalem as its capital.

The PNC, which held its 21st session in valiant Gaza under our national authority, stresses the importance of pooling the Palestinian people's efforts, potential, and capabilities to reach the objective of removing the occupation and settlements and building and consolidating the PNA on the basis of respect for law and order, political pluralism, and democratization. The difficulties faced by the newborn PNA's efforts to provide security, order, and stability have made it necessary to take precautionary steps against the forces that split from the democratic option and jeopardized the Palestinian people's supreme national interests. They gave the Israeli Government a new pretext to continue shirking its responsibilities, circumvent the signed agreements between the two parties, and impose the siege and collective punishment on the Palestinian people.

Denouncing all attempts to harm national security and our people's national interests, the PNC stresses that there is only one authority and one armed force. The legitimate authority is the PNA, and the legitimate arms are those of the legitimate Palestinian authority. The PNC salutes the PNA, which confronted the attempts to undermine security and public order. These attempts are aimed at weakening the PNA and peddling the suspect schemes to undermine our rights. The PNC calls on the PNA to fully abide by law and order to maintain public freedom and democratic life.

A resolution on the presidential and legislative elections. The PNC extends its congratulations to the Palestinian people in the homeland on the great success of this democratic experiment. It considers the presidential and legislative elections the second pillar in the construction of the independent Palestinian entity. The comprehensive participation of the masses in the elections and the full freedom of the forces, parties, factions, and individuals to run for office and present their platforms with absolute freedom helped our people make a qualitative leap forward, becoming one of the democratic peoples in the world of today. This gave strength and momentum to our struggle for freedom, self-determination, and establishment of the independent state.

The elected Legislative Council is urged to fulfill its role in terms of drafting laws and legislation that seeks to enhance our civil and democratic society and rid our people of the burdens that are the result of the prolonged occupation of our land. The Legislative Council, which represents the aspirations on our people in the homeland, shoulders the responsibility of completing internal construction and passing the necessary legislature to do away with the legacy of occupation and the eras of backwardness and domination. It should seek to bolster the supremacy of law, general order, and an independent judiciary; relentlessly combat corruption wherever it exists; and build the civil establishments that safeguard human rights and protect basic rights and freedoms.

— A resolution on Palestinian national unity. The PNC appreciates the efforts to cement our national unity. It also greatly appreciates the comprehensive national dialogue that preceded the PNC's session. The participation of all factions and forces, both inside and outside the Palestinian territories, in the PNC session and in the national dialogue is a correct and serious beginning to strengthen our national unity against attempts to sow division among the national ranks. The constructive national dialogue, which was manifested inside and outside the PNC, opened the door wide for all of the factions to return after the center of action and decisionmaking moved to the homeland.

The PNC calls on all national factions, forces, and personalities to return and participate in building and strengthening the homeland and establishing the independent state on the basis of unified objectives and means, political pluralism, and the democratic option. Our democratic arena opens the door for all to protect our PNA and our pioneering democratic experiment and to build our homeland politically, economically, socially, and culturally to help our people compensate for what they lost during the struggle to remove the occupation and attain freedom in their homeland.

— A resolution on economic development in the homeland. The PNC, having seen the tough economic conditions and the dependence on the Israeli economy due to the occupation, emphasizes the need to formulate an independent Palestinian development plan based on self- reliance, not on dependence on assistance. An independent economic foundation is the basis of national independence. Political independence will be meaningless if it is coupled with economic dependence. This requires rebuilding the Palestinian infrastructure, which was destroyed by the Israeli occupation, and drafting an ambitious construction plan to provide housing for all the sons of the homeland, both those who are living in the homeland and those who return. It also requires setting up establishments that provide incentives for the Palestinian and Arab capital to achieve rapid economic growth, provide a decent living for its citizens, and help the thousands of Palestinians who made sacrifices during the years of struggle, such as the freed prisoners and the children of the martyrs, handicapped, and those pursued by the Israelis.

The PNC calls on Palestinian economists to hold an urgent meeting on PNA soil to come up with a plan to develop the national economy.

The burden of economic, social, and cultural development is primarily linked to the efforts of the Palestinian people. Self- reliance must be stressed as a basis for the principles that govern the development process.

— A resolution on outstanding transitional issues. After discussing the first and second Oslo agreements, the PNC believes that the PNA has implemented its commitments. The PNC voices its denunciation of Israel's attempts to dissociate itself from the signed agreements and obstruct the implementation of many of these agreements, such as those pertaining to crossings, safe passages, the continuation of settlement activity, the opening of roads, the destruction of homes, the failure to release detainees, and the failure to withdraw from the city of Hebron, as well as other commitments.

The PNC calls on the Israeli Government to carry out its commitments in full and to lift the restrictions imposed on the Palestinian economy and society on the pretext of security. Accurate and honest implementation of all provisions of the Oslo agreement will realize security and achieve peace.

— A resolution on Israeli settlements. The settlements established in the Palestinian territories and in Jerusalem, which was occupied in 1967, are regarded as illegitimate and null and void, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy. Permanent peace cannot be realized under occupation. Settlements and peace cannot coexist in any peace agreement between the two sides. Opening bypass roads by dismembering Palestinian territory and expropriating arable land by force and repression indicate that strong Israeli trends are working to undermine the peace process.

— A resolution on holy Jerusalem. The PNC emphasizes that Israel's unilateral decision to annex Jerusalem in 1967 is illegitimate. The PNC does not recognize any Israeli Government measures to make the annexation a fait accompli. The PNC reaffirms its complete adherence to the Arab nature of Jerusalem as an integral part of the Palestinian territory that was occupied in 1967.

Resolutions 242 and 338 apply to Jerusalem, as well as to all the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied in 1967. Holy Jerusalem, which is a focus of spiritual attraction for the people of Palestine, the Arab countries, the Islamic states, and the entire Christian world, is the pillar of permanent peace. It is the capital of the independent state of Palestine. Peace cannot be firmly established unless the Palestinian people regain their full rights in the holy city.

— A resolution on the final status negotiations. The PNC, which approved the Declaration of Principles when it was issued in order to open the road to the peace process, emphasizes that the upcoming negotiations to solve the final status issues — Jerusalem, the settlements, the refugees, the borders, relations with neighboring states, sovereignty, and water — must be based on the full implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as the international legitimacy resolutions that pertain to the Palestinian issue. It must also be based on Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and on emphasizing the Palestinian people's right to freely decide their fate, establish an independent state, and enjoy full sovereignty on the soil of their homeland.

Israel should recognize the interdependence of the final solution elements, stop its procrastination, implement the resolutions of the international legitimacy, and honor the deadlines set in the agreements signed by both sides.

— A resolution on the 1967 refugees. The PNC, briefed by the PLO Executive Committee on the results of the meetings of the four- member Refugee Committee, urges the Israeli Government to meet its commitments. The PNC believes that Israel is trying to disavow an agreement on the need for the refugees to return to their land. The PNC also calls on the PLO Executive Committee for more coordination with Jordan and Egypt to bolster the Palestinian position in these negotiations and enable the refugees to return to their homeland as soon as possible. The PNC urges Israel to strictly abide by Resolution 237, which stipulates the return of the refugees to their land without any delay.

— A resolution on the refugees of 1948. The PNC stresses the need to apply Resolution 194 on the Palestinian refugees. The Refugee Committee, which stems from the multilateral negotiations, adopted this resolution as a basis for discussing the refugee issue and ensuring the refugees' right to return to their homeland. Palestinian refugees in the diaspora constitute a principal issue in the final solution negotiations. The PNC asserts that it will stick to the resolutions of the international legitimacy on the Palestinian refugee issue as a basis for any solution and any negotiations between the two sides and that there will be no solution to the Palestine question unless the refugee issue is resolved.

The PNC also urges the PLO to work to alleviate the suffering of our masses in the diaspora, to provide jobs for our people, and to expand cooperation with host countries to secure a decent life for our kinsfolk in the camps scattered in neighboring Arab countries.

— A resolution on mutual security between the two sides. The PNC asserts that security cannot be separated from achieving peace and that the shortest way to bring about security is to pursue the path of peace and carry out a total withdrawal from Palestinian territory. While stressing its total support for the peace agreement signed between the PLO and the Israeli Government, as well as the need to confront all attempts to endanger the peace process, the PNC urges the Israeli Government to stop its attempts to undermine the agreements on the pretext of security. Continuing to maintain the spirit of occupation by establishing settlements and confiscating land is a major threat to peace.

The PNC also warns of the dangers of Israel's determination to increase its nuclear capabilities and calls for intensive efforts to get Israel to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

— A resolution on the prisoners. The 21st PNC session—the session on construction and building the homeland—sends its greetings to our prisoners in the jails of the occupation who are paying for the freedom of the homeland with their lives and blood. The PNC also urges the Israeli Government to release the prisoners without any delay in the implementation of the signed agreements.

A resolution on activating the PLO's institutions and its missions abroad. The PNC stresses the need to provide the necessary funds to activate our embassies and missions abroad in view of their sizable role in serving our national struggle. In addition, the PNC calls for activating the PLO's departments and institutions abroad in a way that is in line with national action duties at the current stage.

— A resolution on inter-Arab relations. The PNC calls on the PLO to make additional efforts to rectify inter-Arab differences, reactivate institutions for joint Arab action, and draw up a new formula for these relations based on Arab solidarity. The PNC also stresses the need to reinforce our relations with Arab countries concerned with the political process related to a united solution and the peace objective that we all seek to achieve.

The PNC supports Syrian, Lebanese, and other Arab efforts aimed at evacuating Israeli forces from the Golan, which it occupied in 1967, and southern Lebanon and continuing to seek a solution on all fronts in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Resolution 242, which stipulates Israel's withdrawal from the Golan and the Palestinian territories, as well as Resolution 425, which stipulates Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

The PNC values the supportive role played by fraternal Arab countries, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania. The PNC calls for the lifting of the embargoes against Iraq and Libya and expresses its deep solidarity with the two fraternal peoples.

— A resolution on the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. The PNC condemns the ugly crime perpetrated by the Israeli Army against Lebanese civilians in Qana in southern Lebanon. The PNC announces its stand in support of the Lebanese people in their ordeal and in confronting the aggression. It urges the Arab nation to extend aid and support to the Lebanese people, who embraced the Palestinian revolution and Palestinian people. The PNC calls on the Government of Israel to immediately end its hostile acts in southern Lebanon and to withdraw from the Lebanese territories. The entire peace process faces imminent danger if this aggression and the deaths of hundreds of unarmed civilians continues.

— A resolution on the role of the peace process cosponsors. The PNC calls on peace process cosponsors to activate their role in a way that expedites the final status negotiations. It also calls on European countries to actively participate in these negotiations. The PNC calls on the United States to honor its pledges in the letter of assurances and demands that it cancel the U.S. Congress decision to transfer the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This decision strikes a blow to U.S. credibility and endangers the peace process.

A resolution on Jordanian-Palestinian relations. The PNC reiterates its adherence to the previous PNC sessions pertaining to the establishment of a confederation between the states of Palestine and Jordan after the establishment of the independent Palestinian state and based on the voluntary and free choice of the two fraternal peoples.

— A resolution on Egyptian-Palestinian relations. The PNC emphasizes the special nature of Egyptian-Palestinian relations and asks the PNA to strengthen these relations in all political, economic, social, and cultural domains. The PNC hails the prominent role President Husni Mubarak played in reaching the peace agreement.

— A resolution on international relations. The PNC stresses the United Nation's unchanging responsibility toward the Palestinian problem and the need to exercise its role to realize a just solution of the various aspects of this problem. The PNC calls for an effective UN and Security Council role in implementing the resolutions of the international legitimacy that pertain to the Palestinian problem.

The PNC calls for effective UN participation in the peace negotiations. The PNC values the EU's supporting role and the role of the Islamic states and the African and Latin America countries in supporting of our cause at international forums. The PNC salutes the Russian Federation, China, and Japan. It expresses its denunciation of the Israeli-Turkish military cooperation.

The PNC salutes our great people, who have performed a miracle by defeating the occupation with the intifadah and who established their National Authority as a nucleus for an independent Palestinian state.

The PNC salutes our brave masses in Jerusalem, Hebron, Nabulus, Ramallah, Tulkarm, Janin, and Qalqilyah and hails their steadfastness and sacrifices, which were crowned with the establishment of our National Authority. The PNC salutes brave Gaza and its proud masses who played host to the PNC's 21st session.

The PNC salutes the glorious Arab nation and stresses that the establishment of the National Authority on Palestinian soil was realized by the sacrifices of the Arab nation and its people, who waged wars for Palestine and who faced aggressions and offered their souls for the sake of Palestine and Jerusalem. Our council sends greetings of thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to every Arab and Muslim.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Abd-al-Shafi on Palestinian Charter Amendment

JN2604183696 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1550 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Telephone interview with Dr. Haydar 'Abd-al-Shafi, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and former head of the Palestinian negotiating team, by

Ahmad Birru in the Paris studio; place and date not given; from "The Week's Event" program—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Birru] What prompted the Palestine National Council [PNC] to approve the Palestinian National Charter amendment?

['Abd-al-Shafi] Logically speaking, since we are abiding by the peace principle, it is unreasonable for us to keep the charter articles on Israel and the armed struggle. This is logical. However, the cherished aim is to realize permanent and durable peace. A responsible stand to realize this objective is required by both sides. Firm peace cannot be established without justice and fairness. For the Palestinian side, this means recognizing the Palestinians' right to self-determination, establishing an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, and respecting the rights of refugees as stipulated in Resolution 194.

[Birru] Does this means that the amendments were made too soon?

['Abd-al-Shafi] Exactly, we paid the price before we received the merchandise. One pays the price beforehand if he is certain that the merchandise is inevitably coming. What happened is not the same. On the contrary, since the Oslo agreement, Israel has actively expropriated land, established settlements and bypass roads, and implemented repressive measures against the people—closing Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank, and so on. How can we justify this Palestinian concession?

[Birru] The Israeli Labor Party has decided to cancel paragraphs objecting to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Is this the first step?

['Abd-al-Shafi] I do not know how to describe this step. In any case, it is a negative step, not a positive one. Canceling paragraphs is not enough. There should be paragraphs affirming Israel's approval of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and so on. In fact, my objection is based on this fact. As I said in the beginning, it is logical to cancel the charter amendment and anything that contravenes our commitment to the peace process. But having canceled the articles, we paid the price. We have nothing to bargain with. What is more dangerous is that by placing obstacles before them, we have stripped our future generations of the ability to work effectively to realize their national aims.

[Birru] Now that the articles have been canceled from the charter, do you support the emergence of Palestinian movements that adopt armed struggle, given that the Palestinian states and rights have not been realized?

['Abd-al-Shafi] I say, and I think this is self-evident, that people under occupation can resort to all means to fight occupation, including armed struggle. There is no argument about this. But we have made a choice, namely, peace. If Israel does not respond and if matters deteriorate toward fighting, then Israel will be held responsible.

[Birru] A new Palestinian charter will be adopted. Has a date been set to adopt this charter?

['Abd-al-Shafi] Yes, the committee that will redraft the charter has been given six months.

[Birru] Do you expect the third and final phase of the negotiations to begin and the issue of the Palestinian state to be discussed before the six months has passed?

['Abd-al-Shafi] Yes, this is supposed to be the case. The final status negotiations should begin 10 days from now. There will be a four or five month period during which we will see what Israel has to offer. I say now that if the world is really interested in the issue of peace in the region, then it is clear that, through this decision, the Palestinian people have shown their adherence to peace and their readiness to abide by their choice. The world must put an end to Israel's recalcitrance, which is based on its military might.

[Birru] Yesterday's PNC resolutions will most probably be used to help Shim'on Peres' campaign. Do you expect this to be a positive element in his campaign, one that will bring him success?

['Abd-al-Shafi] Of course, I imagine that Israel's pressure and insistence is related to the election campaign. Let me say that I am not optimistic that Peres and the Labor Party will truly offer what is required for the sake of peace. The world should show an interest and abandon its ineffectual, indifferent role. The world has a basic role, because the Israeli stand is mainly based on its military might. There is a clear violation of law, human rights, etc. Why is the world indifferent, especially the democratic world? Only a serious world stand can force Israel to respect international legitimacy and the requirements of a just peace. We want the world to take such a stand.

Palestinian Affairs: ALF Withdraws From PLO Executive Committee

JN2704104096 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0915 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Nicosia, news agencies, 26 Apr (INA)—It has been announced in Gaza that the Arab Liberation Front [ALF] has withdrawn from the PLO Executive Committee.

This came in a memorandum the ALF submitted to President Yasir 'Arafat, who is also chairman of the

PLO Executive Committee. In this memorandum, the ALF pointed out that its withdrawal from the PLO Executive Committee is caused by the amendment of the Palestinian National Charter, which is not in keeping with the struggle waged by the Palestinian people and the Arab nation, and which also realizes the Zionist entity's wishes of achieving its expansionist dreams which are hostile to Palestine and the nation.

The ALF asserted that it will remain faithful to the blood of martyrs and strugglers, and that it will continue its struggle to enhance the Palestinian Arab people's national unity in the course of their fight to regain their inalienable national and historic rights.

The decision to amend the Palestinian National Charter has drawn strong reactions on the Palestinian and Arab scenes. Nationalist forces, mass and professional organizations, as well as Palestinian figures rejected this decision, saying that they will continue to adhere to their firm and clear nationalist positions. Meanwhile, the Zionist entity, the United States, and Britain supported this amendment, which promotes Zionist and imperialist schemes and interests.

The White House issued a statement on behalf of U.S. President Bill Clinton strongly welcoming the amendment. Malcolm Rifkind, British secretary of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, also welcomed the amendment.

A Palestine National Council session held in Gaza decided to amend the Palestinian National Charter by revoking the paragraphs related to struggle against the usurper Zionist entity.

Palestinian Affairs: PFLP, DFLP Reject Charter Amendment

JN2704155896 (Clandestine) Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic 1330 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Mahir al-Tahir, official spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP], made a statement to the media in which he said that the PFLP Political Bureau held a consultative meeting to discuss the issue of annulling the Palestinian National Charter by the 'Arafat authority.

He said the PFLP adheres to the charter and rejects any amendments to it. Those who rose their hands to approve the charter amendment have departed from the Palestinian national principles and have placed themselves on a collision course with the will of the Palestinian masses, the spokesman said.

An official spokesman for the Political Bureau of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine [DFLP] stressed the DFLP's rejection of the resolutions issued by the so-called Palestine National Council, especially the resolutions on amending and annulling the charter and the approval of the Oslo agreements and their annexes. He stressed that such resolutions are not binding on the DFLP because they abandon and compromise the Palestinian people's national rights.

The DFLP spokesman said that these resolutions are not the end of the journey. They will not make the people and their effective forces abandon their rights or their struggle, the spokesman said. He added that, despite the harm done to the PLO by the resolutions of the recent session of the so-called Palestine National Council in terms of its representational role and program, the DFLP stresses its eagerness to continue to work with all Palestinian forces that seek to maintain the unity of the people and their national institutions in order to protect the PLO and revive its role as a national coalition.

This stand stems from the DFLP's awareness of the future political challenges, led by the challenges of the permanent solution negotiations, the agenda of which will include such important and decisive issues as Jerusalem, the refugees, the settlements, and the future of the Palestinian political entity.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat, Sha'th Welcome Lebanon Cease-Fire Agreement

JN2704135796 Gaza Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 27 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat today welcomed the cease—fire agreement in Lebanon. The agreement was declared yesterday, after 16 days of Israeli bombardment in Lebanon. President 'Arafat told correspondents that the agreement is very important. He indicated that the agreement reflects a desire to stop the military operations in Lebanon.

President 'Arafat said that, in accordance with this agreement, our Lebanese and Palestinian brothers will be spared from more Israeli shelling. All we had hoped for was a halt to the aggression against the Palestinians and Lebanese in Lebanon.

Nabil Sha'th, minister of planning and international cooperation, said the agreement has lifted the obstacles that hindered the peace process between Israel and the Arabs. He added: I hope that this agreement will lead to the activation of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon. He also hoped that the agreement will be helpful to the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories. These talks are due to begin early May. [video shows 'Arafat making statements to correspondents as he enters an unidentified building]

Palestinian Affairs: Cabinet Discusses Cease-Fire, PNC Session, Final Talks

JN2704140396 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat chaired the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers at the Presidential Office in Gaza City today. The council voiced its deep satisfaction with the international efforts that produced a cease-fire and ended the suffering of the Lebanese and Palestinian people in Lebanon.

The cabinet ministers voiced hope that the cease-fire will be a step toward achieving a just and comprehensive peace in order to preserve the right of region's peoples to live in security and peace.

The council also discussed the results of the 21st session of Palestine National Council [PNC]. The ministers said they valued the PNC's final statement as comprehensive and as having opened the way for the Palestinian people and their elected leadership to enter the next stage with confidence.

Commenting on the meeting, former Justice Minister Furayh Abu- Middayn said that the council discussed the impact of the PNC's resolutions, the difficulties facing the peace process, and Palestinian preparations for the final status negotiations with Israel, which are scheduled to begin on 4 May. Abu-Middayn pointed out that the council has made the necessary preparations for the success of the negotiating delegation. He said an agenda for the negotiations will be drawn up on 4 May.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Receives Phone Call From Christopher

JN2604190496 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat received a telephone call from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher this evening. Christopher congratulated 'Arafat on the success of the 21st session of the Palestine National Council, which ended yesterday. The two sides also discussed the latest political developments regarding the situation in Lebanon. 'Arafat received a similar telephone call from Dennis Ross, U.S. coordinator of the Middle East peace process.

Palestinian Affairs: PA Frees 'Dozens of Hamas Members' After Dialogue Overtures

TA2804051296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Palestinian Authority [PA] has freed dozens of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] members arrested after the wave of suicide bombings in Israel in March. A Palestinian security official said the release follows overtures toward dialogue from a top Hamas leader. The official would not give a specific figure, but said dozens of prisoners have been released in what he described as a gesture to mark the Muslim holiday of 'Id al-Adha, beginning today. Witnesses said up to 80 people were freed yesterday, and three Hamas political leaders were released last week, including the group spokesman Mahmud al-Zahhar. The PA still holds about 600 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists in jail.

Palestinian Affairs: Abu-al-'Abbas Alleges Italy Gave In to U.S. on Al—Molqi

BR2604140196 Rome LA REPUBBLICA in Italian 26 Apr 96 p 13

[Interview with Abu-al-'Abbas, head of Palestinian commando that hijacked the "Achille Lauro," signed "M. A.", in Gaza; date not given: "It Was No Crime To Kill Klinghoffer" — first paragraph is LA REPUBBLICA introduction]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gaza — Abu-al-'Abbas has renewed his charges against Italy. Majid al-Molqi, head [as published] of the commando group that hijacked the "Achille Lauro" in October 1985 and killed the Jewish American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, "is not a murderer but a fighter." Italian justice has issued two unjust sentences, "under pressure from the Americans." We met with him during an interval of the Palestine National Council session.

[LA REPUBBLICA] What is your opinion concerning al-Molqi's escape from prison?

[Al-'Abbas] Italian justice has been tough on us. There was no fair trial; there was submission to U.S. pressures. I can understand all this; I feel no rancor toward Italy; I know that Italy is part of a world that has its own rules and its own alliances. This is why I have attached no importance to the sentences issued; I knew in advance that Italy would be unable to do otherwise.

[LA REPUBBLICA] Do you condemn the murder committed by al-Molqi?

[Al-'Abbas] I am sure that Italy should have released him, because 11 years' imprisonment is enough. Al-Molqi did not commit a crime in the real sense of the penal term. True, an error was committed that led to the death of a passenger, but al-Molqi did not mean to kill him. Israel too kills Lebanese, and the United States killed Iraqis. In those instances, did any judge act to punish those responsible for the death of civilians? Al-Molqi is a fighter, not a murderer. It was a mistake, and now this business is over and done with.

[LA REPUBBLICA] Did al-Molqi receive any help in escaping?

[Al-'Abbas] There was no help, and no escape plan. He escaped on his own initiative while he was on leave. In any case, I have not seen him since.

[LA REPUBBLICA] Are you not afraid that Israel could support the U.S. deputy's demand for your arrest?

[Al-'Abbas] I would not have come here unless I had made the situation absolutely clear.

[LA REPUBBLICA] Do you mean that the United States and Israel have given guarantees concerning your liberty?

[Al-'Abbas] No, they have given me no guarantees.

[LA REPUBBLICA] So why do you feel confident?

[Al-'Abbas] I did not say that I feel confident. I am just saying that I am here to perform a patriotic duty, and am not worried about what may happen to me. Police action, like military action, is not without problems. Those, like myself, who have been involved in military action for a long time, are not worried about what may happen to them.

Algeria

Algeria: GIA Offers To Exchange Priests for Prisoners Held in France

MM2604113996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 26 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by Kamil al-Tawil in London: "Armed Islamic Group Offers Paris Exchange of 'Prisoners' for Kidnapped Priests"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Algerian Armed Islamic Group [GIA] has announced that the seven French priests kidnapped about a month ago in the Medea region, are still alive. The GIA has offered France an exchange of "prisoners" for a number of jailed GIA members.

This is the GIA's first public statement on the fate of the seven priests, bearing in mind that, since the first days of the kidnapping, reports from Algeria had indicated that the Frenchmen are alive. However, it was generally believed that they were being held by an armed group close to the Islamic Salvation Front (whose leadership abroad condemned the kidnapping).

The same reports said that contacts were held in mid-April with the kidnappers, and that French and Italian Catholic quarters participated. These quarters heard the kidnappers' demands concerning the release of prisoners in France, including one of the GIA's leaders. The contacts were held in extreme secrecy, and there were reports last week that they had failed. However, the GIA statement has given hope for another round of negotiations, although observers doubt that any result will be achieved in view of the fact that it would be difficult for France and Algeria to accept the terms of the "exchange of prisoners" offer. [passage omitted]

Algeria: GIA Claims 10 Policemen Killed in Search for Monks

LD2604221896 Paris Radio France International in French 2130 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The GIA [Armed Islamic Group] has said about ten Algerian policemen have been killed in search operations around Medea, the area where the [French] Trappist monks were kidnapped.

Algeria: Newspaper Employee, French Teacher Murdered

LD2704144696 Paris France-Info Radio in French 1400 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] An employee of the newspaper EL MOUDJAHID and a French language teacher had their throats slit on 22 April, it was revealed today. Selim Batel reports from Algiers:

[Batel] The murderers showed unbelievable cruelty. They first machine-gunned the medical officer at the pro-government newspaper EL MOUDJAHID and then slit his throat under the eyes of his family. Same fate for a woman who taught French at a school in the Blida region, an Islamic fundamentalist stronghold: The terrorists decapitated her in the classroom in front of her horrified students. [passage omitted]

Egypt

Egypt Welcomes Cease-Fire in Lebanon

NC2604185696 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1752 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 26 Apr (MENA)—The Arab Republic of Egypt has welcomed the cease-fire agreement that was reached between Israel and Lebanon this evening to put an end to the acts of violence and aggression by the Israeli forces against Lebanon that have lasted for the past 15 days. Stating this, Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa said this evening that Egypt welcomes this agreement, which will enable the parties to return to the negotiating table on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. This shows the importance of the peace process in the region, which is in line with the position Egypt has repeatedly expressed to the various parties and to the cosponsors of the peace process.

Egypt: Mubarak Congratulates Leaders Involved in Cease-Fire

NC2604213896 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Husni Mubarak has sent a cable of congratulations to U.S. President Bill Clinton expressing appreciation for the efforts of the United States in leading the movement that has brought about the [cease-fire] agreement reached today between Lebanon and Israel.

The president also sent a cable of congratulations and appreciation to French President Jaques Chirac for the French efforts that contributed to this agreement. President Mubarak also sent cables of congratulations to Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi and Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. The president sent a cable of congratulations to Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres on the occasion of reaching this agreement.

In addition, Prime Minister Kamal al-Janzuri sent a cable of congratulations to Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri on the occasion of reaching the cease-fire agreement.

Egypt: Mubarak Receives Phone Call From Christopher on Cease-Fire

NC2604211996 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2035 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 26 Apr (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak this evening received a telephone call from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in which he briefed him on the latest developments in Lebanon and the results of the talks that took place during the past 24 hours, as well as the details of the agreement reached for a cease-fire.

President Mubarak clarified to Christopher his views on how to handle matters in the region in a way that promotes stability, security, and respect for sovereignty for the states and peoples.

President Mubarak also explained his views regarding the future of the peace process in the Middle East.

Christopher made his phone call from Israel before leaving Tel Aviv airport. President Mubarak received a similar phone call from Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

Egypt: Musa Cables Congratulations to Christopher, de Charette

NC2604185896 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1755 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 26 Apr (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has praised the efforts of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to reach the cease-fire agreement between Israel and Lebanon, which were crowned with success.

This came in a cable 'Amr Musa sent to the U.S. secretary of state today. 'Amr Musa also sent a similar cable to French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette in which he expressed his appreciation of de Charette's part in achieving this agreement. The foreign minister also sent similar cables of congratulations to the Lebanese prime minister and foreign minister.

Egypt: Editor Criticizes U.S. 'Pressure' To Save Israel's Peres

NC2604190796 Cairo AL-MUSAWWAR in Arabic
26 Apr 96 pp 4-6

[Article by Chief Editor Makram Muhammad Ahamd: "Washington Is Applying Pressure To Save Peres From Lebanon's Mud"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Shim'on Peres reaped only failure from his dirty war in Lebanon. The Grapes of Wrath fell apart without achieving anything. This is despite the fact that thousands of raids were launched against the villages of southern Lebanon and that 400,000 inhabitants were displaced. The operation failed despite nonstop artillery shelling of houses and roads — as a result of which the south was cut off from the rest of Lebanon — and despite the Qana massacre, in which Israeli aircraft equipped with high-tech devices dropped "smart bombs," which never miss their target, and killed 130 Lebanese villagers who had sought refuge under the UN flag!

Peres launched his dirty war on the pretext that Hizballah was firing Katyusha rockets at the settlement of Qiryat Shemona in northern Israel. For Peres, the chief objective of Operation Grapes of Wrath was to silence Hizballah's rockets, destroy Hizballah's organizational structure, and kill its members wherever they are—in the south, in the al-Biqa', or in the Beirut suburbs. But the Israeli Defense Forces failed to achieve any of these objectives. [passage omitted]

The aim was to destroy Hizballah, and it was believed that this objective would be reached quickly. But Hizballah grew stronger. Israel failed to destroy the party's organizational structure, and Hizballah suffered few losses compared to the massive size of the military operation. Despite the ferocious Israeli air and ground bombardment, Hizballah fired about 500 Katyusha rockets at Israel's northern settlements without the Israeli Defense Forces, with their aircraft and advanced reconnaissance capabilities, being able to detect the launchers or silence them. [passage omitted]

The failed invasion of Lebanon by Begin and Sharon in 1982 resulted in the emergence of Hizballah on the Lebanese stage, and it gave Iran a chance to obtain a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean because of Iran's empathy with the shiites in Lebanon. Peres is now completing this mistake. With the failure of Operation Grapes of Wrath, Hizballah has grown stronger and appears to the Lebanese and all the Arabs as a symbol of the steadfastness of "resistance" against the Israeli occupation.

—Peres has failed to impose Israel's will on Hizballah, which is still firing rockets.

—He has failed to divide the Lebanese. All of them are committed to defending resistance.

—He has failed to tame the Lebanese Government and force it to disengage its ties with Syria.

—He has failed to isolate Damascus, which is now the venue of all the diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.

—And he has failed to prove the charges against Iran, for he has given Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar

Velayati a chance to hold rational negotiations with the Europeans.

All these results were contrary the wishes of Peres, who finds himself sinking in Lebanon's mud, with his hands stained with the blood of innocent people who were victims of crimes no less horrible than the Nazi crimes. [passage omitted]

Peres has showed a face as ugly as that of Sharon. He reminds everybody of Israel's image as a bizarre racist entity characterized by aggression. His vain dreams of a new Middle East, of Arab- Israeli cooperation, and of a different age without hostility and hatred evaporated in only 10 days. With his recent war in Lebanon, Peres planted the seeds of deep hatred, nurtured a sense of doubt and fear, destroyed the hopes for peace in the mind of every Arab, and turned sentiments into a boiling hidden anger. He did not know the limits of using force, and he miscalculated the Arab reaction, especially since his collective punishment of the Lebanese people follows his collective punishment of the Palestinian people, which showed a grave disdain for Arab feelings. [passage omitted]

But the most serious thing in this issue is Israel's success in dragging the superpower to its wrong position. Washington gave Peres the green light to start his aggression against Lebanon. It did not give him merely a yellow light — by which the United States can deliberately disregard a possible aggression. It gave him the clear green light, which shows its collusion. Without Washington's advanced approval, Peres would not have been able to perpetrate the aggression.

Washington supported the aggression from the very beginning and made bogus excuses and justification was achieved, and Washington continued to apply pressure to save Peres from Lebanon's mud and to secure an agreement better than the July 1993 understanding, one that makes the Israeli presence in the border strip safe without the Lebanese resistance being able to confront this presence. This was to be in return for a vague and unspecified promise of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. [passage omitted]

Washington will have to draw the correct conclusions from the Lebanese tragedy—pure force cannot achieve security. And blatant prejudice, absence of justice, and the unleashing of the forces of aggression may lead to the collapse of the peace process, or they may unleash the suppressed anger in the Arab souls.

Egypt: Musa Praises Israeli Remarks on Palestinian State

NC2604112596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1025 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 26 Apr (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has described as positive a statement by the Israeli Labor Party spokesman on the party's dropping a clause opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state in its election program. He added that this step helps clarify things concerning a final resolution of the Palestinian issue.

The Israeli spokesman said the Israeli Labor Party had endorsed a program for the next election campaign that did not exclude the establishment of a Palestinian state.

In his statements today, Musa said the step comes at an important time, days before Israeli elections and before the initiation of final talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority that are scheduled for 4 May.

Musa commented on other issues. He said the Palestinian decision to rewrite the Palestinian Charter and previous resolutions in line with the new situation provides a suitable opportunity to assert the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza.

He noted that this decision complements the Palestinian Authority's recognition of Israel, where the ruling party scrapped its objection to the principle of setting up a Palestinian state. Musa emphasized that these two measures generate a favorable climate and represent fresh impetus for the Palestinian-Israeli track of the negotiations in the Middle East peace process. The two measures, he added, also pave the way for serious negotiations on outstanding problems, primarily Jerusalem, the refugees, settlements, the exercising of self-determination, borders, and mutual security.

Egypt: Editor Criticizes U.S. 'Pressure' To Save Israel's Peres

NC2604190796 Cairo AL-MUSAWWAR in Arabic 26 Apr 96 pp 4-6

[Article by Chief Editor Makram Muhammad Ahmad: "Washington Is Applying Pressure To Save Peres From Lebanon's Mud"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Shim'on Peres reaped only failure from his dirty war in Lebanon. The Grapes of Wrath fell apart without achieving anything. This is despite the fact that thousands of raids were launched against the villages of southern Lebanon and that 400,000 inhabitants were displaced. The operation failed despite nonstop artillery shelling of houses and roads —

as a result of which the south was cut off from the rest of Lebanon — and despite the Qana massacre, in which Israeli aircraft equipped with high-tech devices dropped "smart bombs," which never miss their target, and killed 130 Lebanese villagers who had sought refuge under the UN flag!

Peres launched his dirty war on the pretext that Hizballah was firing Katyusha rockets at the settlement of Qiryat Shemona in northern Israel. For Peres, the chief objective of Operation Grapes of Wrath was to silence Hizballah's rockets, destroy Hizballah's organizational structure, and kill its members wherever they are—in the south, in the al-Biqa', or in the Beirut suburbs. But the Israeli Defense Forces failed to achieve any of these objectives. [passage omitted]

The aim was to destroy Hizballah, and it was believed that this objective would be reached quickly. But Hizballah grew stronger. Israel failed to destroy the party's organizational structure, and Hizballah suffered few losses compared to the massive size of the military operation. Despite the ferocious Israeli air and ground bombardment, Hizballah fired about 500 Katyusha rockets at Israel's northern settlements without the Israeli Defense Forces, with their aircraft and advanced reconnaissance capabilities, being able to detect the launchers or silence them. [passage omitted]

The failed invasion of Lebanon by Begin and Sharon in 1982 resulted in the emergence of Hizballah on the Lebanese stage, and it gave Iran a chance to obtain a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean because of Iran's empathy with the shiites in Lebanon. Peres is now completing this mistake. With the failure of Operation Grapes of Wrath, Hizballah has grown stronger and appears to the Lebanese and all the Arabs as a symbol of the steadfastness of "resistance" against the Israeli occupation.

—Peres has failed to impose Israel's will on Hizballah, which is still firing rockets.

—He has failed to divide the Lebanese. All of them are committed to defending resistance.

—He has failed to tame the Lebanese Government and force it to disengage its ties with Syria.

—He has failed to isolate Damascus, which is now the venue of all the diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.

—And he has failed to prove the charges against Iran, for he has given Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati a chance to hold rational negotiations with the Europeans.

All these results were contrary the wishes of Peres, who finds himself sinking in Lebanon's mud, with his hands stained with the blood of innocent people who were victims of crimes no less horrible than the Nazi crimes. [passage omitted]

Peres has showed a face as ugly as that of Sharon. He reminds everybody of Israel's image as a bizarre racist entity characterized by aggression. His vain dreams of a new Middle East, of Arab- Israeli cooperation, and of a different age without hostility and hatred evaporated in only 10 days. With his recent war in Lebanon, Peres planted the seeds of deep hatred, nurtured a sense of doubt and fear, destroyed the hopes for peace in the mind of every Arab, and turned sentiments into a boiling hidden anger. He did not know the limits of using force, and he miscalculated the Arab reaction, especially since his collective punishment of the Lebanese people follows his collective punishment of the Palestinian people, which showed a grave disdain for Arab feelings. [passage omitted]

But the most serious thing in this issue is Israel's success in dragging the superpower to its wrong position. Washington gave Peres the green light to start his aggression against Lebanon. It did not give him merely a yellow light — by which the United States can deliberately disregard a possible aggression. It gave him the clear green light, which shows its collusion. Without Washington's advanced approval, Peres would not have been able to perpetrate the aggression.

Washington supported the aggression from the very beginning and made bogus excuses and justifications for it. When the situation changed after the ugly attack against the UN camp, when it became clear to everybody that the Israeli military operation was a solid failure, and when Israel failed to destroy Hizballah's organizational structure, the U.S. President, under the pressure of the French initiative, growing European interest, and the resounding scandal of the Israeli Defense Forces, hurriedly announced that there an immediate cease-fire was needed.

But regrettably, nothing was achieved, and Washington continued to apply pressure to save Peres from Lebanon's mud and to secure an agreement better than the July 1993 understanding, one that makes the Israeli presence in the border strip safe without the Lebanese resistance being able to confront this presence. This was to be in return for a vague and unspecified promise of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. [passage omitted]

Washington will have to draw the correct conclusions from the Lebanese tragedy—pure force cannot achieve security. And blatant prejudice, absence of justice, and the unleashing of the forces of aggression may lead to the collapse of the peace process, or they may unleash the suppressed anger in the Arab souls.

Egypt: Paper Criticizes Coming U.S.-Eritrean Military Exercises

NC2604190296 Cairo AL-AHRAM AL-MASA'I in Arabic 23 Apr 96 p 2

[Editorial: "The U.S. Exercises with Eritrea: Why Now and in Whose Interest?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The United States never tires of political and military moves that, every time, bring a lot of surprises that astonish both its friends and its enemies in the Middle East, despite everybody's prior knowledge of the motives and facts behind these moves. Overall, these moves cast dark clouds of doubt over U.S. credibility in the region.

While the region and the entire world are preoccupied with the Israeli massacres in Lebanon — which have so far received full U.S. support and backing — Washington is getting ready to hold joint military exercises in the Red Sea with Eritrea! Yes, Eritrea!

This is a strange and sudden step that could have grave consequences, especially as a conflict erupted few months ago between Yemen and Eritrea over Hanish Island in the Red Sea, which is part of Yemeni territory occupied by Eritrean forces.

The odd thing is that the United States was one the countries that mediated to resolve the crisis and prevent Yemeni-Eritrean military clashes. It even warned Yemen several days ago against launching a military action to retake the occupied island. So, what prompted the United States to hold military exercises in the same disputed area, when it knows that negotiations and moves are underway in several directions to find a settlement?

Does not the choice of Eritrea as a partner with which to hold military exercises in the Red Sea mean that Washington is taking a biased stand on Eritrea's side in this conflict, when it should in theory take a neutral stand as a mediator between the two sides? Or has bias on the side of the criminal and the aggressor become one of the constants of foreign U.S. policy, as is the case in the Lebanese crisis?

The upcoming U.S. military exercises will consolidate Eritrea's occupation of Hanish Island. They even raise many questions as to the secret intentions of U.S. policy in the region. Who is this Eritrea, the very small state that has just been established, hastily, with which the United States, the mightiest military power in the world, wants to hold joint military exercises?

What is the size and nature of the Eritrean military forces that could join the vast U.S. military machine in such exercises? What military experience will the U.S. forces gain from their Eritrean partner in the exercises?

If th3e matter is merely one of holding military exercises in the Red Sea, why was Eritrea specifically chosen, when there are many countries friendly to the United States with coasts on the Red Sea!

Is there some link between the U.S. military exercises with Jordan, the Israeli exercises in Turkey held a few days ago, and the coming U.S. exercises with Eritrea?

Of course, there is no objection to the right of any country in the region to hold military exercises with the United States. This undoubtedly has military advantages, gained by the other parties. But it is still legitimate to ask about the timing of these exercises, their sites, the other parties participating in them, and the nature of the circumstances of each case, because there is a strange link between the coming exercises in the Red Sea and political and military actions that have been going on below the surface for some time.

Even though it is said that the United States made the agreement some time ago to hold these joint exercises with Eritrea, the United States should nevertheless realize that the timing is significant in view of the fact that no settlement has been reached regarding the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict over Hanish Island, a conflict in which — reportedly — non-Arab regional parties helped back the Eritrean occupation in one way or another.

Who has become the other's agent in the region: the United States or Israel?

There is probably an exchange of roles. At any rate, this phenomenon threatens the Arab interests as regards peace and security, regardless of whether Israel is the agent of the United States or whether it is the other way around!

Egypt: Palestinian President 'Arafat Arrives in Cairo

NC2904084796 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0833 GMT 29 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Apr (MENA)—Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat arrived in Cairo from Gaza this morning on a one-day visit to Egypt.

President Husni Mubarak is scheduled to meet President 'Arafat to discuss developments in the region, the peace process, especially on the Palestinian track, and arrangements concerning the final-phase talks between the Palestinians and Israel.

Egypt: President Mubarak Meets 'Arafat, Delegation

NC2904104796 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1005 GMT 29 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Apr (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak today received Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat, who arrived in Cairo earlier today.

Dr. Usamah al-Baz, first Foreign Ministry under secretary and director of the President's Office for Political Affairs, attended the meeting.

Also present on the Palestinian side were Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, minister of culture in the Palestinian Authority; Ahmad 'Abd-al- Rahman, a member of the delegation accompanying President 'Arafat; and Zuhdi al-Qidrah, who is Palestine's ambassador in Cairo.

Egypt: Interior Ministry Releases 313 Repentant 'Extremists'

NC2704174796 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1645 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 27 Apr (MENA)—Today 313 extremists who have declared their repentance were released from the Mazra'at Turah Prison. The release is part of a policy pursued by the Interior Ministry, in coordination with the media and al-Azhar Mosque. Under this policy, extremist elements attend religious orientation lectures on jurisprudence, the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, and shari'ah. In conjunction with al-Azhar ulema, the Interior Ministry has organized several seminars on these subjects inside prisons.

A statement by the Interior Ministry has affirmed that the ministry releases the repenting elements only after ensuring that they have reverted to the genuine religion and renounced aberrant and deviant ideas.

Egypt: Mubarak Receives Bahraini Heir Apparent

NC2904113396 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1100 GMT 29 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Apr (MENA) — Today, President Husni Mubarak received Shaykh Hamad Bin-'Isa Al Khalifah, Bahraini heir apparent and commander in chief of the defense force.

The Bahraini heir apparent arrived in Cairo yesterday for a several-day visit to Egypt.

Libya

Libya: JANA Editor Comments on Lebanon Cease-Fire

LD2704133196 Tripoli JANA in Arabic
0755 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut 27 Apr — Yesterday a so-called cease-fire was announced following the Israeli barbaric aggression against Lebanon which has resulted in the martyrdom of hundreds of Arab Lebanese people, who witnessed the Israeli enemy committing the most atrocious massacre in contemporary history in the Lebanese [village of] Qana.

The Arab Affairs editor at the Jamahiriyah news agency [JANA] commented on this. He said: "Any agreement that ignores the root of the problem, which is the presence [wujud] of a usurper enemy occupying Palestine and other parts of the Arab world, will not be realized and will not go beyond the paper on which it is written. What is wanted for Arabs today is to force them to accept a peace that has been prepared by the Israelis and America is working on imposing it upon them unconditionally. It is the peace of the Israelis and not the Arabs, who have reaped nothing from this alleged peace except more humiliating concessions, mass massacres, and forfeiture of rights, while the enemy alone reaps the fruits of its peace from the increasing recognition of its existence to ensure its security and gives it a free hand to slay the Arab Palestinian and Lebanese peoples — destroying Arab homes while their inhabitants are still inside, displacing those who remain alive — and considering any resistance to this aggression to be terrorism, on which international conferences are held to condemn it and Arabs are slain in the name of perpetrating it."

The editor wondered what could the Arabs expect from contacts and negotiations taking place when missiles and artillery rounds are pouring forth. It is a process of forceful imposition of pre-prepared results, not the least of which are making available all means of ensuring the Israelis' security and, in return, forcing the Arabs to accept the fait accompli and taking away from them any weapon or capability to resist their enemy.

Real peace will not take place with the continuation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, southern Lebanon, and the Golan and the Israelis' possession of an arsenal of nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological weapons of destruction, and the continuation of two-thirds of the Palestinian people being homeless outside their land. A peace based on justice will only take place when all the Palestinian people return to Palestine, have free elections under the supervision of the United Nations, as is the case in South Africa, and a democratic state called Palestine is established. Then there will be no problem in Lebanon or the Golan, because of the end of the root of the problem.

The JANA Arab Affairs editor concluded by saying that what has made the enemy go too far in its aggression, committing barbaric massacres against the Arab people in Palestine and Lebanon and imposing fabricated solutions on them, is the Arabs' noncommitment to the agreements and charters they have ratified in their Arab League — especially as regards the joint Arab defense treaty — and their nonimplementation of these charters and their inability to make use of the condemnation of the Israeli massacres against them, and even their inability to meet and hold a summit to confront the dangers threatening the existence of the Arab nation and its future, despite the trotting of some of them to take part in the Sharm al-Shaykh conference — the results of which have given the Israeli enemy a free hand to commit the terrorist massacres against this nation.

Libya: JANA Editor Condemns UN Imposition of Sanctions on Sudan

LD2804105096 Tripoli JANA in Arabic
0730 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 28 Apr (JANA) — The so-called Security Council has adopted a resolution imposing diplomatic sanctions on Sudan from 10 May for its alleged involvement in supporting terrorism.

JANA's Arab affairs editor commented on the issue and said that, despite Sudan's denunciation of terrorism, America wants deliberately, within the framework of implementing its selective policies, to attach the charge of terrorism to whomever opposes its policies and designs aimed at imposing hegemony on the Arab nation and surrender on the Arab world.

The editor added that when Sudan denounced the attempt to assassinate President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa last June and condemned it, that did not exclude it from America's determination to implicate it in this operation.

The editor stressed that the policy of laying siege to Arab countries constitutes a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and the UN General Assembly's decisions. It will not help in the building of just relations between countries, but will consecrate the principle of discrimination between the countries in the United Nations; that is, between those who have the power to impose sanctions and the countries on which they will be imposed, at a time when the Israelis are being exempted from any sanctions stipulated by Chapter Seven, or any other chapter, of the UN Charter. For, despite the international condemnation and denunciation of the continued Israeli barbaric aggression against Lebanon and its people, towns, and villages, as a result of which hundreds of women, children, and old people have fallen, America has refused to condemn this aggression. It has scorned the international community's will in an insolent stance which embodies encouragement for practising terrorism, protecting terrorists, and dealing in different standards. While the Israeli enemy is being acquitted by America, numerous Arab countries are being punished only for exercising their choices in seeking to develop outside the framework of submitting to American hegemony and designs in the Arab world.

The JANA Arab affairs editor concluded his commentary by saying that people in the world are becoming aware of this reality. Will the Arabs ever be aware of what they are subjected to by the champion of world terrorism Israel? Will the Arabs ever be aware of the dangerous consequences that would result from the siege imposed on Sudan, particularly those resulting from the heart of the American-Israeli plan to encircle and destroy Egypt because of its position as the most powerful Arab state?

The encirclement of Sudan and the Great Jamahiriyah means the reinforcement of the siege on Egypt, thus cutting off its natural geographical access southward to Sudan and westward to Libya. With Israel in the east and the Mediterranean in the north, the Arab countries become completely isolated.

The crusading West will know no end to its attempt at putting this plan into practice. Iraq and Libya yesterday; today it is the turn of Sudan as a step toward the encirclement of Egypt; tomorrow it will be Syria, through the Israeli aggression and occupation of Lebanon, Jordan's welcome to NATO forces, and Turkey's welcome to Israeli forces. This amounts to laying the ground for imposing a complete siege on Syria and on the Arab nation, country after country.

Libya: 'Militant Islamic Group' Gives Details of Operations

MM2604112996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
26 Apr 96 p 6

[Unattributed report: "Libyan 'Group' Warns Secularists Against Claiming Responsibility for Operations"]

[FBIS Translated Text] London, AL-HAYAH — The (Libyan) Militant Islamic Group [MIG] yesterday warned "secularists" against claiming responsibility for the "jihad operations" carried out by the MIG, saying that U.S. intelligence (CIA) "will not make real heroes of the group calling itself the Libyan Movement for Change and Reform," which includes Colonel Khalifah

Haftar and Ibrik al-Suwaysi. A statement signed by MIG leader 'Abdallah al-Sadiq said that 11 security men were killed in last month's operation in Surt, that Col. 'Isa Salih al-Bur'usi was killed in the Wadi al-Injil battle, and that the MIG slit the throats of four security men "as if they were sheep" and wounded Col. Salih Rajab, head of the central logistics organ.

The statement said that "mujahid Kamal 'Ashur Zaqlam," MIG member and an Arabic language teacher at Ibn-Sina School, was killed and that "weapons were seized following the mujahidin's attack on two police stations in Ra's al-Hilal and al-Qubbah." The statements asked the secularists "to be aware of your status, since your era has gone forever."

Sudan

SUDAN: SPLA Leader John Garang Denies Rumors of His Demise

AB2604173296 London BBC World Service in English 1505 GMT 26 Apr 96

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Not for the first time, there were reports from Khartoum this week that the rebel SPLA [Sudanese People's Liberation Army] leader John Garang was dead. The claim was that he had been killed in a shootout with an aide (Gahat May Nagot) after the subordinate refused to attack positions of rival rebel Riak Machar, who recently signed a peace deal with the Khartoum government. Well, SPLA officials strongly denied the claims and this afternoon John Garang himself called us up. Robin White asked him if he was dead.

[Begin recording] [Garang] Yes, I am alive. Categorically no,

I'm not dead.

[White] You are sure of that?

[Garang] As sure as one can possibly be.

[White] Now, did anybody try to kill you?

[Garang] Again, categorically no. Nobody tried to kill me at all.

[White] So, where did the story come from?

[Garang] It came from Khartoum. I have been listening to the news releases. They have even named the person who is supposed to have killed me, and that person as I talk with you now is actually not in southern Sudan. He is on a mission abroad. He could not even have possibly tried to kill me because he is not in the country. The regime has run out of lies. They are trying to create something sensational, something to disinform, to distort, to confuse our people, but the people will not be confused.

[White] Has anybody tried to assassinate you recently?

[Garang] I am telling you the God's truth. Nobody tried to assassinate me. It is the wishful thinking of Khartoum. I want to categorically say that I'm not dead, nobody tried to kill me, I am in safe hands, I am with my soldiers.

[White] Where exactly are you?

[Garang] Exactly in southern Sudan. I am sitting down under a very big tree.

[White] Where is this tree?

[Garang] Somewhere, somewhere in southern Sudan. Of course, if I tell you al-Bashir will be hearing that and feel the appeal to be very interested in my demise. I would not want to make it that much easier for them. [end recording]

SUDAN:Foreign Ministry Issues Statement on UN Sanctions

EA2804192796 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1500 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the compassionate, and the merciful: a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on [UN] Resolution 1054:

The Foreign Ministry wishes to express its feelings of shock, injustice, and bitterness toward UN Resolution 1054, which imposes diplomatic sanctions on Sudan.

The resolution came at a time when new facts and evidence clearly demonstrate that the basis on which the accusation was founded, and Resolution 1054 passed, was disordered and there were no facts, evidence nor documents to prove the presence in Sudan of suspects involved in the assassination attempt against the Egyptian president.

This is because Sudan, acting in good faith and despite the inadequacy of evidence and necessary information and lack of cooperation from the concerned parties, took all necessary practical measures needed for the implementation of the resolution as an affirmation of its cooperation.

It [the Foreign Ministry] went on to say that Sudan did not expect any condemnation on the basis of the Resolution 1044, because it did not imply at all any condemnation of Sudan, but demanded it comply with the OAU [Organization of African Unity] resolutions, in accordance with the provisions of Article Six of the [OAU] charter.

The decision to impose sanctions on Sudan before obtaining evidence is aimed at isolating Sudan internationally, represents an act unprecedented in the council's conduct and creates a dangerous problem by resorting to despotic, reckless, and arbitrary practices.

It represents injustice, prejudice, and deviation from the principles of justice on which this organization [the United Nations] was founded, because the resolution has not been based on specific or clear standards, which could justify imposition of sanctions.

Sudan, reaffirms it full adherence to UN principles and conventions, and will continue to work as an effective member of the world community, but it considers that the resolution was passed at the instigation of some member states in order to achieve certain political objectives, without due regard to the implications on Sudan's stability, unity and stability of the region as a whole.

The circumstances under which the resolution was passed have proved that under no circumstances can Sudan be isolated regionally and internationally, and that Sudan will continue to act positively and optimistically within the internaitonal arena.

Sudan, while commending the stance of the friendly countries which showed sympathy and understanding to its position, hopes that these countries will steadfastly maintain this stance in order to raise high the voice of truth, justice, and human values.

Sudan once more reiterates its condemnation of all forms of terrorism in accordance with its deep-rooted values derived from its faith and traditions, and reaffirms its readiness to cooperate with all countries and organizations in quest for the truth and consolidation of the principles of justice and peace.

This is the end of the Foreign Ministry's statement on the UN Security Council's Resolution 1054.

Tunisia

Tunisia: Foreign Ministry Praises Lebanon Cease-Fire

LD2704235996 Tunis Tunisian Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2300 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Foreign Ministry has issued the following statement: Following the announcement of the accord reached on a cease-fire between Lebanon and Israel, thanks to diligent efforts by the United States, France, and Syria, Tunisia expresses its satisfaction at this positive development, and hopes that it will strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty on its territory, pave the way for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 425, and provide opportunities for completing the process of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

Bahrain

Bahrain: Oppositionist Says Antigovernment Protest To Be Staged

NC2704193696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1730 GMT 27 Apr 96

[Telephone interview with Dr. Mansur al-Jamri in London by an unidentified correspondent; date not given—live or recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Reports mention a call for a week-long sit-in beginning on the blessed 'Id al-Adha. What is the news about this civil disobedience scheduled for that date?

[Al-Jamri] The call is to declare a period of mourning, civil disobedience, and protest against the exercising of terrorism and spreading terror among peaceful citizens. These citizens are suffering from undeclared marshal laws, mock trials denounced by the United Nations and other world organizations, collective persecution, racial and sectarian discrimination, and various means of repression banned by the international community for hundreds of years but that are practiced daily in Bahrain.

To protest this, the Bahraini people will go into mourning by wearing black, visiting martyrs' graves, consolidating public steadfastness in the face of this aggression, and confronting attempts to create sedition among the people.

After failing to terrorize the people and shake society, the government now wants to foment sedition. Steadfastness is the answer to that. Steadfastness comes through general public solidarity for one week up to the 40th day of the death of martyr 'Isa Qambar, as called for by His Eminence Shaykh 'Isa Qasim.

Bahrain: Shiites Ignore Feast Day in Antigovernment Protest

NC2804165096 Paris AFP in English 1527 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, April 28 (AFP) — Many of Bahrain's Shiite Moslems refused to celebrate the traditional Moslem feast of 'Id al-Adha on Sunday [28 April] in solidarity with political prisoners in the Gulf island state, inhabitants said.

Security forces were also deployed in strength around Shiite villages near the capital Manama and used tear gas to disperse an anti-government demonstration in one of them, Sitrah.

"Many of my relatives and friends are in police custody. How can I celebrate" the three-day feast to mark the sacrifice of Abraham, a Shiite Moslem from al-Diraz village said.

"The real festivities will begin when they are released," he added.

Other villagers from Sanabis and Jidd Hafs, northeast of Manama, said they simply went to the mosque to pray on Sunday without taking part in any festivities.

"We are in no mood to wear new clothes or jewelry," as is the tradition. "We want the safe return home of our sons and brothers," said one inhabitant, asking not to be named.

Unrest erupted in Bahrain in December 1994 after the arrest of a Shiite cleric Shaykh 'Ali Salman, who called for the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975 by the Sunni-led authorities.

Since then the government has said it has arrested 600 people linked to the troubles, although lawyers insist more than 2,000 have been detained since last December alone.

In Sanabis on Sunday, groups of young men wore black in a sign of protest. "There are no greetings exchanged and no sweets this year," one said.

According to witnesses, 150 people held a demonstration late Saturday in al-Nuwaydirat village near Manama. "They chanted anti-government slogans and dispersed when the police arrived," an inhabitant said.

(An exiled Bahraini opposition group, the Bahrain Freedom Movement, called Thursday for a week-long campaign of civil disobedience from the first day of the 'Id al-Adha to protest the "repressive policies" of the government.

(The group singled out the government's decision to set up an Islamic council to control Bahrain's religious affairs and appoint clerics. Until now only the Sunni Moslem religious leaders were appointed by the government. Shiites chose their own clerics.)

According to Western estimates, Bahrain's Shiite Moslem population makes up 60 percent of the country's 540,000 inhabitants, though the Sunni Moslems hold the reins of power.

Kuwait

Kuwait: Foreign Ministry Welcomes Lebanon Cease-Fire

LD2704134096 Kuwait Radio Kuwait in Arabic 1000 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An official source at the Foreign Ministry has stated that Kuwait received with immense relief [irtiyah] the news of the reaching of a written agreement for a cease-fire in Lebanon. The source added that, while Kuwait welcomes this agreement and expresses its appreciation for the good efforts made to achieve it, it hopes that the agreement will contribute to consolidating the security and stability of sisterly Lebanon and enable its citizens to continue on the road to achieving more progress and prosperity, after the bitter suffering caused by the Israeli acts of aggression against them for the last two weeks.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Lebanese Prime Minister Phones Crown Prince on Cease-Fire

LD2604232396 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
2255 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jeddah, 26 Apr — His Royal Highness Prince [HRH] 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, the crown prince, deputy prime minister, and commander of the National Guard, tonight received a telephone call from his excellency Rafiq al-Hariri, the Lebanese prime minister.

Prime Minister al-Hariri informed HRH Prince 'Abdallah about the cease-fire agreement over Lebanon after the Israeli air raids, which have lasted for over 10 days.

Prime Minister al-Hariri also expressed the gratitude of the Lebanese Government and people to the custodian of the two holy mosques, King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, and the Saudi people for their supportive stands toward Lebanon.

HRH Prince 'Abdallah, for his part, said he hoped God would bless sisterly Lebanon with more security, prosperity, and stability and enable its people to continue their efforts toward achieving a comprehensive development in Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia: King Welcomes Cease-Fire Agreement in Lebanon

LD2604183096 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1740 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jeddah, 26 April — King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, the custodian of the two holy mosques, received this evening a telephone call from his excellency Rafiq al-Hariri, the prime minister of Lebanon, who briefed the custodian of the two holy mosques on the situation in Lebanon, particularly on the written cease-fire agreement in Lebanon.

The custodian of the two holy mosques expressed his satisfaction at reaching this agreement, pointing out that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was interested in preserving the security and stability of Lebanon, its territory, sovereignty and citizens.

May God preserve him, [King Fahd] renewed the kingdom's position in support of Lebanon and its people and their right to live in freedom and dignity on its land, praying to Almighty God to protect Lebanon and its people against any harm.

Saudi Arabia: Hajj Minister—Authorities Will Not Allow Political Rallies

LD2604150396 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1348 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Jeddah, 26 Apr (SPA) — His excellency Dr. Mahmud Bin Muhammad Safar, the minister for pilgrimage affairs, reaffirmed that the authorities will not allow demagogic acts, propaganda, pictures, slogans, or political rallies during this year's pilgrimage season. [passage omitted]

The pilgrimage affairs minister stressed in a statement to UKAZ, published in its edition today, that the Pilgrimage Affairs Ministry has always tried to ensure that performance of the hajj conforms to the directives of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, which call for providing the best services to God's guests.

Saudi Arabia: Iranian Pilgrims Hold Disavowal Ceremony at Mount 'Arafat

LD2704124196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
0930 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The disavowal of the infidels ceremony was held this morning, with the glorious participation of Iranian and non-Iranian pilgrims to the House of God, in the 'Arafat desert. The pilgrims chanted: Unite! Unite! Death to America! Death to Israel! and declared their rejection of the world's infidels.

[Begin recording] [Unidentified correspondent] I am reporting from the 'Arafat desert. This desert is today brimming with love and prayers of worship for God as well as with the disavowal of infidels, satans, and idols. [passage omitted] The Saudi authorities did not allow this ceremony to be held in holy Mecca and this is why it took place in 'Arafat. [passage omitted]

In continuation of the disavowal ceremony in 'Arafat this morning, Hojjat ol-Eslam val Moslemin Mohammad Mohammadi-Reyshahri, representative of the supreme leader and supervisor of Iranian pilgrims, said in the course of a speech: Muslims should express their disavowal of all arrogant powers, with criminal America topping the list. He added: We have gathered here today to express our contempt for polytheism, heresy, and the Great Satan. [passage omitted] Hojjat ol-Eslam val Moslemin Mohammadi-Reyshahri added:

[Reyshahri] Disavowal of infidels means assisting the people of Lebanon; disavowal of infidels means assisting the people of Palestine and freedom movements all over the world; disavowal of infidels means assisting the Iman of the Age to establish the Islamic world government. [Chants of: "God is great!" "Khamene'i is the leader!" "Death to the opponents of the supreme leader!" "Death to America!" "Death to Israel!" "Death to the Monafeqin (Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization, MKO) and Saddam."]

In this land we seek to reject the enemies of Islam; the enemies of Islamic movements; the enemies of the Palestine Islamic movement and all the enemies of Islam. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Saudi Arabia: Disavowal Ceremony Continues in 'Peaceful' Fashion

LD2704183596 Tehran IRNA in English
1803 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mecca, Saudi Arabia, April 27, IRNA — Tens of thousands of Iranian and non-Iranian pilgrims in their rallies in 'Arafat Saturday [27 April] anathematized ungodly world governments and on top of them America and Israel in fullfillment of the 'bira'at' as integral part of hajj that requires Muslims to disown arrogant unbelievers of the world.

Two Saudi helicopters hovered above the demonstrators as they kept shouting 'down with America' and 'down with Israel' in the burning heat of 'Arafat.

The rallies were peaceful and apparently the saudi police that were alerted for suppressing them if necessary did not find an excuse to do so.

Demonstrators listened to 'amir-ul-hajj', Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, the personal representative of the leader of the Islamic revolution at Hajj ceremonies and later on shouted their approval of a seven-point resolution.

Addressing the multitude of demonstrating pilgrims Hojjat ol-Eslam Reyshahri said that the denunciation by pilgrims of ungodly world governments was the first step for helping the cause of the 12th Imam of Muslims (may God hasten his readvent), the rightful successor of Prophet's (saw) household, now in occultation.

Reyshahri said that pilgrimage to holy Mecca had to be done with the same intent and purpose as it had been done by Prophet Abraham (as) if the hajj was to be viewed as a forum with an eye to solving the pressing universal problems.

Amir-ul-hajj reminded that the denunciation of ungodly powers of the world had its starting point in 'Arafat, and added that the demonstrators in 'Arafat Saturday were heeding an order by the leader of the Islamic revolution of Iran to voice their hatred of the world of unbelievers and on top of them America.

He said to anathematize power-wielding unbelievers demanded the heartfelt feeling of demonstrators and a renewal of their sacred covenant with strugglers fighting against disbelief and idolatry. Without referring to few Saudi Muslim clerics that had previously voiced their personal nagative opinion of the denunciation ceremony he said that those who harbored such feelings were ideologically aligned with the international arrogance.

He said the anathematization of ungodly power wielders of the world was the best political weapon with which to fight the enemies of Islam and on top of them America and Israel.

Reyshahri said, "the criminal America and Israel must realize that trusting in God and taking inspiration from the 12th. Occult Imam Mahdi may god hasten his readvent, the Islamic Republic will eventually prevail over all her enemies."

Except for few occasions since 1979, Muslim pilgrims have staged the 'bira'at' demonstrations , (disavowal of infidels) in 'Arafat during the hajj ceremonies every year. Bira'at, in the modern time revived by the founder of the Islamic republic, Imam Khomeyni, consists mainly of a symbolic but heated denunciation of the unbelieving powers of our time, on top of them America and its regional protege the Zionist government.

Saudis have consistently frowned at the ceremony and once resorted to a brutal suppression of demonstrators in the rallies that invovled over 400 fallen martyrs and many unnecessary injuries in 1987.

They have also tried, unsuccessfully, to offer counter evidence in disapproval of that element of the annual Muslim ceremonies in Mecca and 'Arafat through their leading sheikhs at the grand mosque in the holy city of Mecca and Masjid al-Nabi' in the holy city of Medina.

Despite the official feeling in Saudi Arabia, however, every year more and more Muslims worldwide seem to heed Iran's call for staging the Bira'at rallies during their pilgrimage to Holy Mecca.

Saudi Arabia: Rally in 'Arafat Desert Issues 7-Point Resolution

LD2704143596 Tehran IRNA in English
0841 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mecca, April 27, IRNA — Iranian and other Muslim pilgrims attending this year's hajj rituals, massively took part Saturday [27 April] morning in the 'disavowal from pagans' ceremony in 'Arafat, Saudi Arabia.

Announcing on Wednesday the cancellation of the disavowal from pagans ceremony in Mecca, Hojat ol-Eslam Mohammad Mohammadi-Reyshahri, the leader's representative and head of the Iranian haj pilgrims said that the ceremony would be held either in 'Arafat or Mena later.

At the end of their rally here Saturday morning, the hajj pilgrims issued a seven-point resolution in which they stressed that if the hajj rituals had been observed in accordance with the instructions of holy Koran and the traditions of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), many problems of the world Muslims would have been removed.

The participants in the rally said they believed that the Islamic dignity and honor of Muslims lied in their emancipation from aliens, return to genuine Islamic teachings and rejection of the American-style Islam.

Underlining the unity among world Muslims within the framework of towhid (monotheism) and traditons of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as the key to the victory of Muslims, the statement strongly condemned any amovement to create a rift among religions and called it a conspiracy masterminded by the Great Satan.

"As the great leader and founder of the Islamic Republic (Imam Khomeini) announced several years ago, we also consider the usurper regime of Qods as an illegitimate entity and voice our overall support for the combatant Palestinian Muslims and Intifada. We believe that restoration of peace and security to the Middle East is possible only through annihilation of the regime occupying Qods," the hajj pilgrims said in their resolution.

The statement said, "We strongly condemn the brutal aggression of the U.S.-backed Israel on the oppressed people of Lebanon and while feeling sympathy with the Lebanese combatants and beloved Hizballah announce that the only way to get rid of this malign tumor is continuation of resistance and jihad operations against the usurpers."

The participants in the rally also announced support for the just struggles of Muslims throughout the world especially those in Bosnia, Tajikistan, Kashmir, Chechnya and Algeria and called on their brethren in Afghanistan to foil plots of the global arrogance by resorting to unity.

Saudi Arabia: Source—Iranian Mount 'Arafat Rally Not 'Demonstration'

NC2704144596 Paris AFP in English
1412 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 27 (AFP) — Iranian pilgrims defied a Saudi ban on political demonstrations and held a rally against the United States and Israel on Mount 'Arafat in Saudi Arabia on Saturday [27 April], Iranian state radio said.

"Thousands of Iranian and other pilgrims shouted "death to America" and "death to Israel" in the rally Saturday, and condemned Israel's "recent aggressions in Lebanon," it said.

Tehran said the demonstration had been organized in Mount 'Arafat after Saudi authorities prevented Iranians from holding one in Mecca, home to Islam's holiest sites.

"We are here to voice our anger and disgust at all nonbelievers, specially the great satan, the United States," the official in charge of the Iranian pilgrims, Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, said in a speech to the crowd.

"Our demonstration is to help the innocent people of Lebanon, the people of Palestine and all liberation movements throughout the world," he said in the speech broadcast on the radio.

But an AFP correspondent at Mount 'Arafat said the Iranian pilgrims calmly performed in their camp the traditional "disavowal of pagans," rally but no demonstration occurred.

The ceremony has been performed during the hajj in recent years and is seen as a rejection of all those considered to be opposed to Islamic teachings.

Some two million Moslem faithful converged on Mount 'Arafat on Saturday for the climax of the annual pilgrimage, known as the hajj. They were to spend the day praying at the site where the Prophet Muhammad gave the last sermon before his death in 632.

Reyshahri said Wednesday he had decided "on the guidance" of Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i to cancel the rally in Mecca to avoid clashes with Saudi police.

But another official with the Iranian delegation here said Thursday that Iran could defy the ban and hold a demonstration against the United States and Israel either at 'Mount Arafat or in Mena instead.

Saudi authorities had been keeping a close watch on Iranian pilgrims to prevent them from holding the rally. Reyshahri said Thursday the Iranian camp in Mecca was being circled by armed Saudi units.

Iranian leaders insist that the pilgrimage can not be "stripped of its political dimension" and the "disavowal" rally has to be organized each year as a "main ritual" of the event.

The issue has created tension in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which Tehran accuses of following an "American brand" of Islam at odds with the Islamic republic's revolutionary concept of the region.

Iranian pilgrims ignored the Saudi ban in 1995 by holding a gathering inside their camp at Medina, just north of Mecca.

There have been several violent incidents in the past at such rallies. In 1987, more than 400 pilgrims, mostly Iranians, were killed in clashes with Saudi security forces.

Saudi Arabia: Minister—Security Forces Prepared To Prevent Disturbances

LD2604203396 Riyadh SPA in English
1950 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jeddah, April 26, SPA — Dr. Mahmud al-Safar, the minister of hajj, has made it clear that the concerned security bodies would never permit any act that might disturb the peace and security of pilgrims including mob acts, propaganda and political processions, pictures and slogans during this hajj season.

He told the Jeddah-based daily paper "'UKAZ " that protection and safety of pilgrims is a divine duty of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which will provide all means of comfort and security for pilgrims.

He appealed to all pilgrims to devote full time for worship, observe the laws and regulations of the country and keep away from all acts that might profane the sanctity of the holy lands and violate the laws of the kingdom.

The Ministry of Hajj, in cooperation with other concerned bodies will continue to provide the best services and facilities to ensure maximum comfort and safety for all pilgrims as per directives of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, he said.

Yemen

Yemen: Authorities Hold Somali Boat Refugees; Others Said Drowned

MM2604151596 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 26 Apr 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by 'Abd-al-Salam al-Tahir: "Pirates Drowned Somalis off Yemeni Coast Because They Had No Money on Them"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Aden, Sanaa, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — Eyewitnesses and security sources in Abyan Governorate have told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that Yemeni authorities in the governorate are holding two members of the Somali crew of a small boat that has arrived in Shabwah with a number of refugees on board. It is believed that the 63 bodies recovered off the Yemeni coast are of Somalis whom pirates threw into the sea when they discovered they had no money on them.

Eyewitnesses who witnessed the burial of scores of bodies say that another Somali boat, which had arrived with 260 Somalis on board, is currently being held. Its passengers have been moved to the Somali refugees camp in the Hajin [as transliterated] area in Abyan, while the boat's owners are still being held pending investigation. [passage omitted]

Yemen: Salih, French Envoy Discuss Mediation Efforts

JN2704134596 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, the president of the Republic, today received French Ambassador Francis Gutmann. They discussed developments related to the French mediation efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict between our country and Eritrea that resulted from the Eritrean aggression against and occupation of al-Hanish al-Kabir Island.

The brother president stressed that our country wants to see the French efforts succeed. Yemen adheres to belief that a peaceful solution is the ideal way to resolve differences and strengthen security, stability, and peace in the Red Sea.

The meeting was attended by Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister; Ambassador Ahmad 'Abdallah al-Basha; Marwan Nu'man, director of the Africa Department; Dr. 'Abdallah al-Zayr, director of the information and cultural affairs at the Presidential Office; and (Marcel le Gell), France's ambassador to our country.

Yemen: French Envoy Makes Statement, Leaves for Eritrea

JN2704180096 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Brother Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, the president of the Republic, received French Ambassador Francis Gutmann today. [passage omitted]

The French envoy left Sanaa today. In a predeparture statement to SABA', he said he would hold talks with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki this evening and would also brief him on the results of his talks with brother President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih.

Iraq: Former Irrigation Minister Reportedly Defects to Jordan

MM2604142596 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 26 Apr 96 p 4

[Unattributed report: "Reports of Former Iraqi Minister's Defection to Jordan"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — An informed Iraqi source in the Jordanian capital has said that former Iraqi Irrigation Minister Nizar al-Qasir fled to Jordan recently. However, it is not clear yet whether he will join the groups opposed to President Saddam Husayn.

The source pointed out to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that al-Qasir fled in complete secrecy, and that he is now staying at a secret location in the Jordanian capital about which no information has been revealed so far. [passage omitted]

Iraq: Republican Guard Forces Reportedly Deploy Along Road to Jordan Border

NC2704145896 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi People in Arabic 1400 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Press reports indicate that sizable Republican Guard forces have been deployed along the international highway between Baghdad and the Jordanian border, backed by air defense equipment. Iraqi air bases in the western region also have been reinforced.

Both the Jordanian authorities and the regime have adopted strict security measures along the border. Saddam's regime has raised taxes and travel charges on travel [abroad] by Iraqis to about half a million dinars in order to curb travel.

Two-month-long joint Jordanian-U.S. military exercises will begin on Wednesday [1 May] in the Jordanian northern, eastern, and southern deserts with land and air forces taking part.

Iraq: KDP Issues Statement on Talks With U.S. Delegation

JN2704085596 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan in Arabic 1800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Statement by the Kurdistan Democratic Party spokesman in Salah al-Din on 24 April—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] The U.S. delegation, led by Mr. Deutsch, director of Northern Gulf Affairs at the U.S. State Department, concluded talks with the leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK]. The delegation returned to its country via Turkey.

Mr. Deutsch and his delegation, accompanied by Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, arrived in Kurdistan on 22 April. They held separate talks with the two parties' leaders to formulate a final draft peace agreement between the two sides. KDP Leader Mas'ud Barzani received Mr. Deutsch and his delegation on 24 April, the last day of the U.S. delegations' visit. Our party's delegation also held another and final session with the U.S. delegation.

Talks between our party and the U.S. delegation were positive, constructive, and characterized by a spirit of cooperation with the U.S. peace efforts. There was mutual understanding on reaching a final draft agreement and finding a mechanism to monitor its implementation by local peace-keeping forces under the supervision of the Iraqi National Congress.

[Signed] Spokesman for the KDP, 24 April 1996

Iraq: Opposition Says Army Helicopters Bombarding Kurd Villages

LD2804165696 Tehran IRNA in English 1613 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ilam, April 28, IRNA — An Iraqi opposition radio, monitored here last night said that helicopter gunships of the Iraqi Army launched air attacks on the Kurdish populated province of Al-Sulaymaniyah on Tuesday [23 April] and Wednesday last week.

'Voice of Iraq' said that several women and children were killed and wounded in the villages of Qarah Hasan, Qarah (Wissi) and (Khalou)-Baziyan in the (Chamchaman) district of al-Sulaymaniyah, northeastern Iraq. It said the air assaults have inflicted heavy damage on residential and shopping areas of the villages. The Voice of Iraq did not give details of the air raids.

Iraq: Opposition Reports Helicopters Blown Up, Officers Arrested

MM2904102696 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 29 Apr 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "Four Helicopters Blown Up in North Iraq, Officers Arrested in Central Iraq"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — Iraqi opposition sources have said that four Iraqi military helicopters were blown up earlier this month in a military airfield near the Kurdish areas not controlled by the central government in Baghdad, while officers were arrested in a camp in central Iraq for reasons that are unclear.

AL-MUSTAQBAL radio, which started transmission to Iraq by satellite last week and is run by the opposition National Accord Movement, cited military sources from the Iraqi Army General Staff in Baghdad as saying that the four helicopters were on the ground in a military airfield belonging to the command of the 2d Corps of the Iraqi Army, which is based in al-Mansuriyah Camp in Diyala Governorate, northeast of the capital Baghdad.

The causes of the explosion, which destroyed the four helicopters completely, are not known. Al-Mansuriyah Camp is situated near the contact lines between government forces and the Kurdish areas controlled by Kurdish parties since 1991, and on an international road leading to the border with Iran. The radio cited the same sources as saying that Lieutenant General Salah Isma'il al-Tikriti, commander of the 2d Corps, was summoned to Baghdad for interrogation. Lt. Gen. al-Tikriti was expelled from the Army and sent to prison some years ago on charges of receiving bribes.

At another level, the same sources said that, according to "eyewitnesses" in al-Mahawil Camp near al-Hillah in Babil Governorate, south of Baghdad, an armed unit comprised of forces from the military intelligence organ and the special security organ, which is led by Qusayy, Iraqi President Saddam Husayn's youngest son, stormed the camp on Sunday of last week [21 April] and arrested a number of artillery officers, among them Colonel 'Amir Muhammad 'Ali al-Juburi, commander of the field artillery battery, and Col. Engineer 'Abd-al-Qadir Nuzhat of the missiles unit. The radio added that at the same time other units from the military security organ arrested a number of officers from al-Mahawil Camp and moved them to an unknown destination belonging to the special security organ. The radio did not mention the reasons for these arrests.

The special security organ is tasked with protecting the Iraqi president, members of his family, and senior Iraqi Government officials and preventing any coups or rebellions against President Saddam Husayn. It is also in charge of all the military and civilian security and intelligence organs.

Iraq: Peasants, Wholesalers Blamed for High Prices

JN2804124496 Baghdad AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 3 Apr 96 p 7

["Signals" column by Yunus Hasan al-Samarra'i: "The Rise in the Prices of Vegetables and Fruits and the Required Solution"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Some greedy people, especially the owners of vegetable and fruits stores and peasants, are trying once again to oppose the policy of reducing prices. The prices of these items have again shot up considerably contrary to what the current prices should be and beyond the means of the private sector worker, whose daily income does not exceed 500 dinars, which is slightly better than the daily income of the civil servant which is not more than 200 dinars.

The different parties are incriminating one another and holding each other responsible for the current rise in the market prices of vegetables and fruits. The retailer blames the wholesaler and the latter says that the peasant is responsible. The fact is, all these parties are responsible for the current rise in prices, which the families cannot bear.

It is in the interest of the wholesaler to sell at a high price to get a good commission, and the peasant to seek the right price. The peasant is encouraged by the wholesaler with whom he is sometimes ready to share his high profit

The question posed is: Who are the victims of raising the price of one kilogram of potatoes from 50 to 250 dinars and the price of one kilogram of tomatoes from 20 to 300 dinars? The same can also be said about oranges and other items. Naturally, the victims are all the people and the families who were burned by the prices in the past and were pleased to see them drop to a reasonable level. However, the enemies do not want the people to continue to be happy. A certain group is preventing a drop in the prices of vegetables and fruits to make as much profit as possible at the expense of the families' livelihood.

We must point out a discrepancy here; namely, while the prices of some items which are bought in dollars abroad are dropping gradually every day — for example, today's prices of sugar, tea, rice, and vegetable oil will not be the same tomorrow — the prices of products which are bought with Iraqi dinars are increasing almost daily.

What is needed is to strike hard at the hands of these speculator wholesalers and the other parties standing behind them in order to restore the stability of the prices of vegetables and fruits, meet the demand for them, and stop those with insatiable greed.

Israel: 'Great Satisfaction' With Upcoming Cease-Fire Document

TA2604142596 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1410 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The cease-fire agreement on Lebanon soon to be announced includes a clause that if Hizballah continues to operate from within villages and the IDF [Israei Defense Forces] responds, responsibility for harming innocent civilians will rest with the terrorist organization. That does not mean the fighting will cease completely, although that is the intention of the document.

The cease-fire itself will be announced at 1800 [1500 GMT] in an official announcement by Warren Christopher and Shim'on Peres here in Jerusalem and in a similar announcement in Damascus, but it will go into effect only later in the night or perhaps even only in the early morning. That means that residents will have to continue staying in shelters for several more hours until the fire ceases altogether. There is great satisfaction with the document in Jerusalem. It also contains a supervisory mechanism for implementation of the accord.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1419 GMT adds: "Our military affairs correspondent Karmela Menashe reports that the cease-fire will go into effect only tomorrow morning."]

Israel: Inner Cabinet Approves Lebanon Cease-Fire Plan

TA2604150296 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1440 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Report by Udi Segal]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Inner Cabinet meeting has just ended. The ministers approved the document on a cease-fire in Lebanon. Operation Grapes of Wrath ends the moment the document goes into effect. The official time for a cease-fire is 0400 tomorrow morning [0100 GMT].

The prime minister reported to the ministers and then Uri Savir, coordinator of political negotiations, presented the details of the document. Major General Moshe Ya'alon, head of the Military Intelligence Branch, surveyed the situation in south Lebanon. As usual in Inner Cabinet meetings, the ministers unanimously approved the American document of understandings and the declaration of a cease-fire. [passage omitted]

Israel: Peres Announces Lebanon Cease-Fire

TA2604152396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Joint news conference by Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem—live; italicized passages in English]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Peres] *Ladies and gentlemen, as they say: It's a boy. I would like to congratulate the secretary of state of the United States, Warren Christopher, for an outstanding job that he and his delegation have performed and concluded over the last few days. From an almost impossible situation, with three parties far away from each other, the secretary was able to bring for the first time in my judgment an agreement or an understanding — I shall use this word — between Syria and us, and the Lebanese. The nature of the agreement will be announced by the secretary himself. I want simply to say to the secretary on behalf of our people and behalf of our government, thank you from the depth of our hearts. You have served peace. You did it with great dignity and wisdom and friendship. And I know what a difficult time you have had to go through. It is an achievement for you and for all of us. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank the President of the United States, President Clinton, for asking the secretary and the peace team to come over here at a very trying time and a difficult time. Thank you sir.* [passage omitted]

[Qol Yisra'el's Shlomi Eldar] Mr. Prime Minister, we understand from the agreement that the Israeli-Lebanese-Syrian peace talks will resume as soon as possible. The question is whether al-Asad's behavior in this crisis will influence your stand in the negotiations. Will you be tougher in the negotiations? When we talk about the resumption of the talks soon, will it be before or after the elections?

[Peres] No date has been fixed for the continuation of the talks. The United States will look into the date. I think that when we discuss people and leaders we must judge by results, not behavior. Behavior reflects a great deal of tactics. The fact is that the secretary was today able to conclude with al-Asad an agreement that is much better than the agreement of 1993. It contains very specific clauses about Israel's right of defense, and gives it freedom of action. The agreement strengthens Israel's desire for peace and its desire for security.

[Channel 2's 'Imanu'el Rosen] Mr. Prime Minister, do you not fear that in the wake of these understandings, restrictions will nevertheless be imposed on the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] ability to operate freely in Lebanon in the future. *One question for you, Mr.*

Christopher: Are we going to see Lebanon also when the peace talks will resume maybe in Wye Plantation or any other place?

[Peres] I do not see any restrictions that did not exist previously. On the contrary, I see clarifications for wider freedom of action. At the same time, I would like to add: The fact that Lebanon has now been declared a partner is very encouraging for us. We are not interested in the destruction of Lebanon. We are not interested in the division of Lebanon. We are interested in a Lebanon that is whole and secure, as a good neighbor of Israel. I would also like to transmit that message to the leaders of Lebanon. We do not have any wicked intentions. We do not look for opportunities to harm it. The fact that Syria is a partner to this strengthens it even more because as we all know, the situation in Lebanon is far from simple. I therefore think that we are starting out on a better beginning than previously existed. [passage omitted]

[Qol Yisra'el's Shlomo Raz] Mr. Prime Minister, I am trying to understand what will happen tomorrow morning. Can Hizballah continue to operate although restricted by those understandings? For instance, what will prevent Iran from continuing to transfer war materiel through Damascus to Hizballah, which will continue its shelling, at least into the security zone?

[Peres] There is a Syrian and Lebanese commitment that they will not operate and there is our commitment not to act. I believe that in a joint effort by Syria, Lebanon, and an agreement, the actions will cease.

[Raz] In other words, you expect Syria to prevent Iran from transferring war materiel to Hizballah?

[Peres] The truth is that I do not distribute work. There is an agreement between us and I expect that those who are party to that understanding will do everything they can — and that is quite a lot — to create a new reality. [passage omitted]

[IDF Radio's Udi Segal] Mr. Prime Minister, the first question I put to you is whether the agreement contains a secret annex or quiet understandings. *Mr. Secretary, is there anything in this agreement that prohibits the Hizballah to act from the populated areas, from the villages in south Lebanon? [passage omitted]*

[Peres] There are no secret agreements. There are interpretations agreed upon between us and the United States that will be made public when the time comes. Under the law, we must submit every agreement to the Knesset and that is what we will do.

[Segal] Mr. Prime Minister, assuming the situation existing before Operation Grapes of Wrath returns and there is Hizballah shelling from inside populated areas, will forces be permitted to respond immediately to the sources of fire inside those populated areas in self-defense?

[Peres] The right of self-defense is unlimited and if forces are attacked, they will return fire. I must express deep appreciation for the inhabitants of northern Israel, however, who lived in shelters for two weeks after being attacked and showed maturity and responsibility. I very much hope that life will return to normal. The Inner Cabinet decided to send the finance minister to the Upper Galilee — the Galilee Panhandle, western and eastern Galilee — when the Sabbath ends to assist in the rehabilitation of the destruction caused by the katyushas. I believe that in the situation created — and that is what the secretary of state managed to make clear to the three sides — Syria, Lebanon, and Israel are genuinely interested in a cease-fire and a halt to harming civilians on both sides of the border. Otherwise we would not have come up with this paper. I believe that this desire also existed beforehand, but the consensus achieved in seven short days and seven nights — which I know almost did not exist for the secretary and his team, who worked almost around the clock — is in my view a draft for additional arrangements in the future between our three states. [passage omitted]

[SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE's Deborah Horan] *I have been in contact with Lebanese civilians over the last two weeks and they tell me that if Israel would leave southern Lebanon, that Hizballah's raison d'etre would dissolve and that this would be the way to solve the problem, and they are suspicious of an Israeli desire to stay in southern Lebanon before what they consider a legitimate resistance group has left their land. I want to know how you would respond to that.*

[Peres] *First of all, may I say that we do not intend to remain in Lebanon forever. We do not have any ambitions or any plans of that nature. Secondly, if the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Army will disarm the Hizballah and we shall know that there not two armies in Lebanon but one, and there are not two strategies but one, and there are no two authorities, then we do not have real reasons to remain there. And then we can have a real peace agreement. By the way, we are ready to start the negotiations right away. A real peace agreement that will provide security and peace for Lebanon and Israel. But you cannot have a government and a government within a government which is called a resistance government. The division of authority leads to the division of territory all over the world.*

Israel: U.S.-Israeli Letter of Understanding on Lebanon Detailed

TA2804093496 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 28 Apr 96 p A2

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The United States and Israel have reached a series of understandings regarding the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] freedom of action in Lebanon's security zone. These understandings have been included in an accompanying letter sent by the U.S. Administration to Israel parallel to the understandings that resulted in the cease-fire agreement. The letter was formulated in a meeting two days ago between the chief of staff and the U.S. team.

In the letter, the United States explains its interpretation of the IDF's freedom to react to Hizballah attacks. The letter states that "the IDF's right to retaliate in the broadest sense is recognized."

The accompanying letter details various situations of attacks on the IDF forces in south Lebanon and states that the IDF will be permitted to return fire everywhere, including Lebanese villages, if weapons are fired from them or they serve as launching pads for attacks such as roadside bombs. [passage omitted]

In addition to the accompanying letter, verbal understandings were achieved between the United States and Israel regarding the rules regulating the operation of the supervisory committee slated to monitor the implementation of the agreement. The United States has accepted Israel's request that all the committee's decisions regarding complaints on violations be adopted by general consent rather than voting — something that will prevent a situation in which Israel finds itself in the minority.

A parallel series of verbal understandings was also achieved between the United States and Syria — only these were not written down as was the case with Israel. According to Israeli sources, Syria promised the United States that it would curb Hizballah and calm it down.

Israel: Shahaq, Ya'alon Brief Cabinet on Understandings

TA2804105796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1000 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Chief of Staff Amnon Shahaq explains that according to Israel's interpretation of the understandings in the north, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will be able to operate against terrorist headquarters and launching pads for attacks located in Lebanese villages if fire is directed from these villages or squads use them for planting roadside bombs. The chief of staff made these remarks during the cabinet session, adding that the Americans presented this position to the Syrian president.

Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that in the session, Major General Moshe Ya'alon, the head of the IDF Intelligence Branch, assessed that the Lebanese Government's maneuvering room vis-a-vis Hizballah has increased. Ya'alon also assessed that Syria is interested in the political process.

Israel: Cabinet Thanks U.S. for 'Greatly Contributing' to Accord

TA2804151996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres has arrived in Washington, saying he believed the cease-fire in southern Lebanon would stand up to the test of time. In the absence of the prime minister, Public Security Minister Moshe Shahal chaired the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem. The cabinet's statement afterwards repeated the Israeli position that under the terms of the understandings announced on Friday [26 April], the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] would continue to be able to operate freely. David Ze'ev reports:

[Begin Ze'ev recording] The cabinet reiterated today that the understandings preserve Israel's right to operate freely. A statement released after the weekly Sunday meeting said Israel thanked U.S. President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher for greatly contributing to gaining a written document which gave Israel that right, along with ensuring peace and security for the northern Israeli settlements. The statement said today's cabinet review was a continuation of the inner security cabinet meeting Friday afternoon in which the document of understandings was endorsed.

Government ministers thanked the IDF for acting with determination and persistence and for succeeding in bringing about the situation and conditions in which the understandings were reached without any loss of life to Israeli forces. The cabinet also expressed its appreciation to the residents of northern Israel, in what are referred to as the confrontation line settlements, for their endurance over a long period which allowed the IDF to operate undisturbed. The Israeli Government again expressed deep regret for the harm to Lebanese civilians at Qana who, in the statement's words, were hit inadvertently by Israeli fire, but Israel again stressed the responsibility of Hizballah and the Lebanese Government for the circumstances which led to that incident. The cabinet committed to act toward achieving the swift reconstruction of the northern settlements and repairing as soon as possible the damage to the homes and infrastructure. The government is also to consider ways of compensating for indirect economic damages in the confrontation areas. [end recording]

At its weekly meeting today, the government decided to form a special ministerial committee which would deal with the collection of debts owed by residents of the self-rule areas to Israelis. The committee members are Ministers Liba'i, Shohat, Shahal, and Beilin.

Israel: France's de Charette Returns for More Talks With Peres

LD2704084796 Paris France-Info Radio in French 0800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette returned [from Lebanon] to Israel this morning. He is to have more talks with Shim'on Peres before returning to France after a two-week shuttle mission in the region.

Israel: France's de Charette Meets Peres in Jerusalem

LD2704100196 Paris France-Info Radio in French 0930 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Herve de Charette had talks with Shimon Peres in Jerusalem this morning. The Israeli Prime Minister is to leave for the United States tomorrow for talks with President Bill Clinton. On his return journey, he will stop off in Paris on Wednesday [1 May] for talks with President Chirac.

Israel: Baraq Meets France's de Charette, Criticizes French Ties to Iran, Iraq

TA2704121796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette conferred with Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Ministers Ehud Baraq and Yosi Beilin in their homes this morning. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that Minister Baraq criticized France's ties with Iran and Iraq but praised France for its good relations with Israel. The two also dealt with France's role in the supervisory mechanism overseeing the Lebanon agreement. De Charette told our correspondent that in his meetings, he wishes to stress the friendship between France and Israel.

Israel: France's de Charette Seeks French Role in Syria Talks; Peres Rejects

TA2804135496 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 28 Apr 96 p A3

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Text] France wants to continue to play a role in the peace process and will also be able to assist in advancing the Syrian track, just as it helped in resolving the Lebanon crisis, French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said in talks with Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Minister Ehud Baraq yesterday to sum up his visit to the region. De Charette met with Peres and Baraq at their homes.

According to the French minister, his country has a great deal of influence in Damascus as well and will be able to help advance the negotiations between Israel and Syria. "It would pay you to expand the avenues of activity and not make do with just one. We have a relative advantage with the Syrians," he said. Peres and Baraq responded that the Syrian track is being handled by the United States but that France can help with the Lebanese track.

De Charette said it is premature to assess the impact of the new understandings on Lebanon's independence and the Beirut government's freedom of action. He praised Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al- Hariri, referring to his wisdom and the way he worked to resolve the crisis resulting from the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] operation in Lebanon. "Al-Hariri is the big hope for Lebanon's future," de Charette said.

In his talks, the French foreign minister reiterated his proposal to achieve an arrangement for an IDF withdrawal from the security zone in Lebanon and, at the same time, to disarm the militias and transfer responsibility to the Beirut government. He expressed France's readiness to participate in an international force that would help to implement the arrangement in the future.

Peres will meet with French President Jacques Chirac on 1 May on his return from the United States. Their conversation is expected to focus on France's role in the political process in the region.

Israel: Quiet Along Northern Border as Cease-Fire Takes Effect

TA2704011496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0100 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The cease-fire agreement now goes into effect along Israel's northern border. In the past few hours, there were no reports of exchanges of fire on either side of the border. The IDF [Israel Defense

Forces] stopped initiating shelling this evening, and the Artillery Corps were instructed to only retaliate against sources of enemy fire, if indeed there were such attacks.

Israel: Residents Allowed To Leave Shelters; Naval Blockade Lifted

TA2704083796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The residents of Israel's northern border were permitted to leave the air raid shelters this morning after more than two weeks.

Our correspondent Ilan Ro'e reports that there is hardly any traffic in Qiryat Shemona, and it is believed that it will take several hours before more people appear on the street.

This morning, the electricity current to Qiryat Shemona was restored after Electric Corporation workers repaired the power lines that were damaged in the last volley of katyusha rockets which landed shortly before the cease-fire took effect at 0400 [0100 GMT] this morning. Since 0400, both sides of the border have been quiet.

Residents evacuated from the area told our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar that they would return home only after being certain that the agreement actually guaranteed their safety.

Finance Minister Shohat will meet the leaders of Israel's northern settlements this evening in order to discuss plans for their economic recovery.

[Later on in the same newscast, Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew notes that "the Israel Navy has lifted the naval blockade of Lebanese ports."]

Israel: Peres Office Says Accord Bans All Attacks Throughout Israel

TA2704113196 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An internal document formulated in the Prime Minister's Office which analyzes the new American agreement of understandings in Lebanon says that it expands the understandings reached in the wake of Operation Accountability in several fields.

The document states that the terrorist organizations are not allowed to attack Israel in any way and not only by shelling northern Israeli settlements. It also says that while the 1993 understandings prohibit attacks on northern Israel from Lebanon, the new agreement refers to all of Israel and includes all possible means of attack.

Our political correspondent Udi Segal reports that according to the document, an international mechanism will deal with the rehabilitation of Lebanon. This will weaken Iran's hold on Lebanon because, in the past, it was Tehran that transferred funds for the reconstruction of destroyed villages.

Israel: Lubrani—Understandings Refer Only to Civilians

TA2804081696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0700 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Uri Lubrani, coordinator of government activities in Lebanon, says the understandings reached in Lebanon do not amount to a peace agreement and refer only to civilians on both sides of the border. Mr. Lubrani told Qol Yisra'el that the understandings are better than those attained in the wake of Operation Accountability, but cannot guarantee that there will be no more Hizballah operations against the IDF [Israel Defense Forces].

Israel: Peres Leaves for U.S., France; To Sign Accords With Clinton

TA2804050796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres last night left on a visit to the United States and France. In Washington, Mr. Peres will hold two meetings with President Clinton and will discuss with him, among other things, the phrasing of a military pact proposed between the United States and Israel. He will also sign an antiterror cooperation agreement and an antimissile defense agreement, within the framework of which the joint development of the Arrow missile and a laser system for intercepting katyushas will continue. Our correspondent in Washington Hayim Zissowitz reports that this agreement will give Israel real-time satellite information regarding the launching of surface-to-surface missiles.

During his visit in the United States, the prime minister will also meet Secretary of Defense Perry, congressional leaders, and Jewish leaders.

Israel: Peres on Aspects of Cease-Fire Document

TA2604183596 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Interview with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres by 'Imanu'el Rosen in the Prime Minister Office in Jerusalem on 26 April — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Rosen] Mr. Prime Minister, how will the agreement you reached today prevent Hizballah from continuing to operate?

[Peres] First, we have excellent experience with Syria. They signed a Golan Heights agreement in 1974 and since then not a single shot or katyusha has been fired on the Golan Heights. I see two achievements at the outset: One, this is a written agreement; two, the fact that Syria is part of it. It is difficult to get a Syrian commitment, but when it is obtained, they uphold it.

The United States is behind the agreement. A genuine Lebanese interest is also involved. Hizballah is starting to understand that if it violates the accord, it will become involved in a confrontation with Lebanon and Syria.

[Rosen] Qiryat Shemona Mayor Prosper 'Azran, for whose residents you initiated the operation, said it is a bad agreement that does not satisfy him.

[Peres] I respect Prosper, but how can he react to an agreement he has not read? He did not see the paper and does not know what it involves. Prosper jumps the gun sometimes.

[Rosen] Are there any understandings with the Americans beyond the written agreement achieved today, especially over what happens if roadside bomb and car bomb attacks continue against IDF [Israel Defense Forces] soldiers in the security zone?

[Peres] There is certainly an agreement that if car bombs or roadside bombs or mortar shelling restart tomorrow against IDF soldiers in the security zone, then the United States agrees that we can employ our right of self-defense to take the necessary action to halt the fire and respond to it.

[Rosen] And that right of self-defense is not restricted in territory, location, or anything else?

[Peres] I said quite clearly: It refers to IDF soldiers in the security zone. It is a clear-cut understanding.

[Rosen] Is that understanding acceptable to the Syrians?

[Peres] The Syrians know about that understanding because the United States did not hide from Syria that they are giving us such an understanding.

[Rosen] Did the United States also give understandings to Syria?

[Peres] Not that I know of, but I know that had they given such an understanding to them they would have told us about it. Christopher did an exceptional job. He is an honest and responsible man and just as he told the Syrians about the understandings he has with us, he would have told us about any understandings with Syria.

[Rosen] One of the major flaws of the understandings reached after Operation Accountability was that Hizballah usually operated outside villages but escaped back into them afterward. What will happen if that happens again tomorrow morning? Can we go after a band that escapes into a civilian village?

[Peres] It is clearly written that civilian settlements cannot serve as launch pads for firing, and if they do, that will be a violation of the agreement. Therefore, we will be permitted to use all the necessary means to prevent the violation of the accord.

[Rosen] Are you not concerned about the international supervisory mechanism to be set up, since Israel is handing over to others — Europeans, Syrians, Lebanese — full responsibility for its defense?

[Peres] We suggested that group, which will not vote on its actions. It cannot force itself on anybody, but it can clarify any misunderstandings. Two soldiers were killed, for example, and they said they were civilians. Instead of accusing each other of shelling they will clarify the matter.

[Rosen] There is no doubt that Syria's position will be a guarantee for either upholding or not upholding the agreement. The Syrians continue to permit the transfer of katyushas to Hizballah through their territory. Will that now cease?

[Peres] I believe so. I do not think the Syrians are the ones who initiated the shelling this time. It was the Iranians. We are lucky that the exceptional performance of the IDF and the patience of the residents of the north permitted us to reach such understandings in writing. We did not become dispirited and our stamina was not lowered. We come out of this strengthened in all senses, security-wise and politically.

[Rosen] Is there nevertheless something you regret during these long two weeks?

[Peres] Yes, one thing, the outcome of the shelling on Qana. None of us wanted to see dead adults and children. It was a tragic incident that six shells fell at a site we did not know contained civilians.

[Rosen] Thank you, Prime Minister.

[Peres] Thank you.

Israel: Likud Chairman Netanyahu Attacks Lebanon Accord

TA2604191496 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Interview with Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu by Gay Zohar in the studio and Roni Daniyel on the Lebanese border — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Zohar] Are you reassured by the agreement reached tonight?

[Netanyahu] Like all Israelis, I would like to see this agreement really bring quiet and calm to the northern border, both for us and for the inhabitants of Lebanon. But from what I see, I do not think that goal has been reached because the aim was to prevent Hizballah shelling of our forces and our settlements. Hizballah is right now still shelling.

[Zohar] The agreement goes into effect at 0400 [0100 GMT].

[Netanyahu] In other words, Hizballah is allowed to keep its capability to shell, and it remains armed in the field.

[Zohar] What should have been done to Hizballah that was not?

[Netanyahu] Permit me first to say what the current situation is. First, Hizballah is there and is capable of firing katyushas at any time. Second, its has Israel's permission under this accord to fire at, kill, and maim IDF [Israel Defense Forces] soldiers in the security zone. Third, it has a safe haven. It is not allowed to fire from inside these safe havens, but it can move 100 meters from the south Lebanese villages where it is located and trains, hit IDF soldiers, and then return to the safe havens — but we are prevented from harming these bases.

[Zohar] What should have been done? What would you have done?

[Netanyahu] We have returned to the situation that existed beforehand. I would have acted differently. I would have disbanded Hizballah's infrastructure in south Lebanon.

[Zohar] How?

[Netanyahu] In a military action. And I would have done something else: I would have made sure that there is a Syrian guarantee — by exerting pressure on Syria — and a Lebanese guarantee banning Hizballah from returning to the area.

[Daniyel] What sort of military action would you have carried out to disarm Hizballah forever? Would you have used IDF soldiers inside Lebanon?

[Netanyahu] I would have carried out a series of actions. I do not think this is the place to go into it, but....

[Daniyel, interrupting] You are not yet making the decisions, so you can go into them.

[Netanyahu] No, I do not think I should go into details about the military proposals that exist.

[Zohar] I will put it differently. What options did Shim'on Peres neglect?

[Netanyahu] You invited me to the studio. Permit me to answer each question separately. First, I think there was an option for a wide-ranging military option. You talk about the shelters in Qiryat Shemona. The people said they would have been prepared to stay in the shelters and suffer. These people now feel that security has not been returned to them because they are now Hizballah hostages. Hizballah can violate the agreements at any time. First, I would have carried out a wide-ranging military operation against Hizballah. Second — and this is the main thing — I would have implemented a political operation of pressure on Syria. Instead of us pressuring Syria, al-Asad is now laughing in Damascus. He did not even respond to the demand put to him by Peres to stop the attacks on IDF soldiers in south Lebanon. He refused and Peres capitulated. In other words, we are returning to the situation we found ourselves in beforehand. Instead of Syria's guaranteeing that Hizballah will not operate against us, terrorism will escalate, first against our soldiers and then against our settlements. We have in fact returned to that cycle of escalation.

Israel: Baraq, Likud's Mordekhay on Lebanon Cease-Fire Agreement

TA2704084996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq said that the agreement in Lebanon had accomplished its goals: Quiet had been restored to the Galilee, and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] had been granted freedom of action. The foreign minister said that this time, written understandings had been reached, there was a mechanism to supervise the understandings, and the firing of katyusha rockets from inside densely populated areas had been prohibited. While noting that there was no certainty that Hizballah would uphold the agreement, Minister Baraq explained that Israel retained the freedom to retaliate. In his opinion, Lebanon and Syria would make efforts to prevent any recurrence of their recent unpleasant experience. Minister Baraq was speaking to Qol Yisra'el.

In another interview to Qol Yisra'el, reserves Major General Yitzhaq Mordekhay said that Operation Grapes of Wrath had failed to achieve the necessary goals. Yitzhaq Mordekhay, who is running on the Likud's Knesset list, told Qol Yisra'el that yesterday's agreement was almost identical to the 1993 understandings. He also criticized the government's handling of the negotiations.

Israel: Peres—All Hizballah Attacks in Lebanon Banned

TA2704105196 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0605 GMT 27 Apr 96

[Telephone "talk" with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres, in Jerusalem, Qiryat Shemona Mayor Prosper 'Azran and correspondent Razi Barqay, in Qiryat Shemona, and moderator 'Adi Talmor in the studio — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Talmor] Good morning, Mr. Prime Minister.

[Peres] And a very good morning to you.

[Talmor] Mr. Peres, throughout the night we have heard many residents of Qiryat Shemona and northern Israel express doubts about yesterday's agreement. Judging from their experience with Operation Accountability, they are already anticipating the next volleys of katyusha rockets. What can you tell them this morning, Mr. Peres?

[Peres] First of all, the mayor of Qiryat Shemona reacted with displeasure before he had even read the agreement. However, to address the matter practically, we had a very interesting experience in which Syria signed a cease-fire agreement with Israel on the Golan Heights in 1974. Since that date, not one katyusha rocket or bullet has been fired. This is the first time we have had an agreement in which the United States has declared that Syria and Lebanon are partners to it. The question is: What do you want us to do? It is very easy to be skeptical. Why believe anything? But this is the most significant accomplishment we were able to achieve under the present conditions, and I believe that it far exceeds our expectations.

[Talmor] But when compared to the credit you received from the residents of Qiryat Shemona, who declared their readiness to remain in the air raid shelters — they now feel that a great opportunity was missed.

[Peres] First of all, how do you know what they feel? You have heard only one or two people.

[Talmor] We heard many more than one or two.

[Peres] Okay, but time will tell. There is no point in their remaining in the air raid shelters for no purpose. We said we would reach a better agreement than in 1993, and indeed we attained a written agreement with clear-cut partners. The cease-fire has taken effect, and we will judge the situation in light of developments.

[Barqay] Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to describe a hypothetical situation which I assume came up in your discussions with Secretary of State Christopher. Let us say that Hizballah fires at us from one of the villages. Do the understandings permit us to return fire into that village?

[Peres] I would like to tell you that we can return fire not only there, even if this happens inside the security zone. In addition to the agreement, there is another agreement between Israel and the United States which states the following: As for the right of self-defense, the United States understands that if Hizballah or anyone else in Lebanon acts in a way that contravenes the agreement we reached by attacking Israeli forces in Lebanon or some other form of fire, ambush, suicide attack, explosive charge, or any other form of attack, Israel retains the right to retaliate in self-defense in the appropriate fashion against the armed groups that are responsible.

[Barqay] This returns us to square one from before Operation Grapes of Wrath. If Israel retaliates, with the United States recognizing our right to do so, Hizballah will respond by firing katyusha rockets at our northern settlements while claiming that we fired at Lebanese villages.

[Peres] Are you asking me what will happen if Hizballah violates the agreement? Is that your question?

[Barqay] For example.

[Peres] If it violates the agreement, then the agreement is no longer binding. Really, one cannot just ask aimless questions. The agreement prohibits Hizballah from firing. If it fires, it is breaking the agreement. If Hizballah violates the agreement, we will retaliate.

[Talmor] Let us make things more difficult, Mr. Prime Minister. Assume that Hizballah personnel fire at IDF [Israel Defense Forces] or SLA [South Lebanese Army] troops from open areas and then flee inside a village. Are we permitted to react?

[Peres] Nothing in the agreement says we cannot. There is no such limitation. The agreement prohibits firing in populated areas. It is forbidden to hide inside populated areas. Let me make it clear: There are no limitations on Israel's right to self-defense. This is a principle that stands separately, without any constraints whatsoever.

[Talmor] One more question on this issue. You constantly praise Syria....

[Peres, interrupting] Excuse me, did you read the agreement or are you just improvising as you go along?

[Talmor] Yes, the agreement is here before me.

[Peres] Go on then.

[Talmor] You constantly praise Syria for maintaining quiet on the Golan Heights....

[Peres, interrupting] So, I praise them. Look, let us present things accurately....

[Talmor, interrupting] I have not finished my question, Sir.

[Peres] I do not praise Syria. The question is: Are you condemning Damascus? Is there any argument over the fact that since 1974, Syria has been upholding the agreement almost religiously.

[Talmor] But we are saying that Hizballah is not subordinate to Syria, but rather receives its orders from Iran.

[Peres] That is true. Now both the Lebanese and Syrian Governments have taken a stand against Hizballah. What do you want us to do, sign an agreement with Hizballah? We signed an agreement with the two most serious partners. The same criticism was leveled against the Oslo accords. It is always the same story all over again. They asked what would happen if the PLO does not fight against terrorism? Well, it is. Now we have two partners who have promised to fight to uphold this agreement.

[Barqay] Mr. Prime Minister, I understand that you have not called off your visit and are flying to the United States this evening.

[Peres] That is true.

[Barqay] Would you recommend that the residents of Qiryat Shemona and the western Galilee leave their air raid shelters?

[Peres] Definitely yes.

[Barqay] So they can resume their regular schedules as of this morning?

[Peres] Certainly.

[Barqay] At the beginning of our conversation, you mentioned Qiryat Shemona Mayor Prosper 'Azran, who is one of the people who will have to live with these understandings. He is right here with me, and not for the purpose of political bashing.

[Peres] Let me speak to him.

[Barqay] Here he is. Say hello to each other. I assume Mr. 'Azran has some questions for you.

['Azran] Good morning, Mr. Prime Minister.

[Peres] Good morning, Prosper. Tell me something, did you read the agreement before you reacted yesterday?

['Azran] The full text of the agreement was already published two days before in the newspapers.

[Peres] That is not true. You are simply wrong. Whatever was published is not the agreement but merely the speculation of journalists. You reacted to the media speculation.

['Azran] I must insist that even if you accuse me of not reading the agreement I nevertheless understand its principles....

[Peres, interrupting] No. I am not sure of that.

['Azran] In my opinion very significant questions were asked here.

[Peres] Such as, for example?

['Azran] In your capacity as defense minister, you will have to issue clear instructions to the IDF on when to open fire. As someone who served in the army for several years, I can surmise that the rules of engagement will call for retaliation against sources of hostile fire. The Hizballah fighters do not carry a flag that identifies them. They will fire from the vicinity of villages. The IDF will retaliate, Hizballah will consider this a violation of the understandings, and Qiryat Shemona and the northern border will....

[Peres, interrupting] No, excuse me. If they open fire they will be the ones violating the understandings. We will not look for flags on the bullets. That is the most stupid idea. If they fire, we will retaliate. There is nothing prohibiting us from returning fire.

['Azran] That is clear. However, one of the most difficult problems was getting the IDF soldiers out of the range of their bullets so that they would have no reason to fire at us. This agreement does not resolve this problem, and they will fire at us.

[Peres] Excuse me. This agreement prohibits them from firing at IDF troops in Lebanon. In all friendship, Prosper, I am telling you that you may have read the papers, but you did not read the actual agreement. The agreement is a first-class accord. It is the first time that there have been two partners who have openly stated that they will place constraints on Hizballah. These are the only two possible partners in the region: Syria and Lebanon. We know that Lebanon is not always capable, but we also know that Syria always keeps its word. It is hard to reach an agreement with Syria, but once an agreement is attained, it upholds it.

[Barqay] Mr. Prime Minister, to close this interview, would you like to deliver a message through Prosper 'Azran.

[Peres] Yes, give me Prosper a minute.

['Azran] I hear you.

[Peres] Look, the finance minister will arrive in your city tonight. We want to rebuild the Galilee and especially Qiryat Shemona. Believe me, our hearts are with you and your city. We will fully rebuild the city. We will give your city special treatment, restore the residents' morale, and renovate the houses, and Qiryat Shemona will bloom. As for security and 0efense, this agreement was reached together with the IDF, and I would do nothing to tie the IDF's hands. You have nothing to worry about. It is a first-class agreement, which is more explicit this time and is also in writing. There are two additional guarantors: the United States and France. I believe that this is the broadest and clearest alliance ever formed in the north against Hizballah.

[Talmor] Just one more question, Mr. Peres. In your opinion, Sir, what element does this agreement nevertheless lack, perhaps as a result of the tragic incident in the village of Qana?

[Peres] We should have a peace agreement. Qana lost us a great deal of support in world public opinion; I am aware of that. We will rebuild that support as well. Believe me, all Israelis grieve over the large number of women, children, and men that were killed there. Who wants to see a woman, child, or man killed, regardless of which nation they belong to? We are not murderers; we are acting in self-defense. I am also convinced that the IDF unit that shelled Qana was also acting in self-defense. There was no malicious intention. To my great regret, war can lead to undesired results. I express my sorrow about that; however, I cannot order an army unit that is under attack not to retaliate.

[Talmor] And you just said that Hizballah is forbidden to fire at IDF soldiers in the security zone. That does not appear in the agreement.

[Peres] Yes, according to the understanding between the United States and Israel, the IDF will have the right to retaliate and take the appropriate actions in self-defense against any firing, ambush, or explosive charge that is directed against IDF soldiers in Lebanon.

[Talmor] This definitely provides us with some new headlines today. Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister, and we wish you a successful trip to the United States.

Israel: Army Chiefs Discuss Lebanon Operation, Accord

TA2704181596 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1705 GMT 27 Apr 96

[News conference by Lieutenant General Amnon Shahaq, IDF chief of staff, Major General Moshe Ya'alon, head of the Intelligence Branch, and Maj. Gen. 'Amiram Levin, commander of the Northern Command, at Bet Sokolov in Tel Aviv — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Shahaq] Today, two weeks and a day from the start of Operation Grapes of Wrath, we should remember why we initiated it, how we ended it, and whether this is the situation we want in northern Israel and south Lebanon. I remind us all — and I believe it was said from the outset — that we initiated the operation because Hizballah had created an insufferable situation in northern Israel. Hizballah interpreted the 1993 understandings as meaning that each time it determines that civilians have been injured, it has the right to fire katyushas at the Galilee. For us, that reality was insufferable, and we said we would not agree to it. That is why we initiated the operation. I remind you that Hizballah's aim in shelling the Galilee was not to fight the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] but to harm and kill Israeli civilians. I am pleased that the operation ended without fatalities. Three of our soldiers and over 20 civilians were wounded. One woman was seriously wounded, one sustained moderate injuries, and all the rest were slightly injured.

Following the operation, there is no peace accord between us and Lebanon or between us and Hizballah. I do not think anybody thought we were starting something that would lead to a peace agreement. At the conclusion of the operation, we remain in the security zone, inside Lebanese territory, in order to defend northern Israel from there, because the threats to the north of the country still exist. Hizballah was not disarmed, and that, too, was not something we could achieve in this campaign. What we have achieved, if the understandings are implemented on the ground, is that there will be no firing of any kind or any Hizballah activity against any part of Israel. All the villages, not only in Israel but also in the security zone and north of the security zone, are off limits for the purpose of military activity. That means that Hizballah cannot be located in those villages or, to put it differently, if it is located there, it cannot use those locations to prepare for actions against the IDF and be exempt from a response on our part. If Hizballah or other organizations in Lebanon try to harm the IDF, the IDF will respond everywhere it is located. That is clear to us and to the Americans and, as far as I know, to the Syrians as well. I am sure that via the Syrians, it is also clear to others.

The IDF has the right to harm those who harm it. That point is detailed in a letter appended to the understandings, which was explained in detail to the Syrians. This means that if there is military activity against the IDF in Lebanon — and that includes firing, roadside bombs, suicide attacks, or any other type of attack — the IDF has the right to hit the group operating against it wherever it is located. It is clear to Hizballah that if that group is located inside a village in south Lebanon, the village itself will not be our target but the terrorists inside that village will be and, if they hide among the civilian population, they must take into account that civilians will also be harmed. According to the understandings, this must be clear to everyone. Under these conditions, if Hizballah operates against the IDF, the IDF will operate against Hizballah wherever it finds that organization. If Hizballah decides to keep the Lebanese villages out of the fighting, it will not locate itself there.

I repeat, this is not an agreement to halt Hizballah activities in Lebanon or a peace accord between us and the Lebanese state. This agreement takes the civilians out of the confrontation. We are not looking for a military confrontation, but if we face a confrontation with Hizballah, we will know what to do.

I think that if Hizballah is drawing conclusions from the operation, it should consider what it managed to achieve. I believe that Hizballah now understands that it is not protected anywhere in Lebanon. Despite Hizballah's claim that it defended the civilians in south Lebanon, it has shown that it did not know how to carry out that mission. In fact, the contrary is true. Hizballah is responsible for bringing the greatest suffering and hardship to the residents of south Lebanon. Hizballah paid a very price in casualties in this operation and did not succeed in causing us any civilian or military fatalities. If Hizballah is to abide by the agreement, it cannot locate itself inside the villages or operate from there against the security zone, especially the civilian populations — both ours and in the security zone.

The Lebanese Government will have to act. It has an opportunity to fulfill its role much more decisively. The Lebanese Army will have to decide if it is going to implement the agreement to the letter. If the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese Government are faithful to the agreements, they have a lot of work in south Lebanon. If they do their job, they can bring south Lebanon a new era of quiet in which the population will not be threatened by guerrilla organizations.

During the operation, the tragic incident in Qana occurred. I believe a lot has been said. The main responsibility lies with Hizballah, because although it knew of the UN installation with hundreds of civilians there, it chose to shell from the camp's immediate proximity, thereby making the area a target. I think those who concentrate civilians in such large numbers in a combat zone with the knowledge that it is a combat zone and that terrorists are shelling from nearby increase the risk to those people. Those who sit by and do not try to prevent the terrorists from using the nearby area increase the danger. We shelled, and we have a role in what happened. We investigated the matter, and although the investigation has not been concluded yet, I have been presented with conclusions; however, I asked for a more detailed report in several areas. I did not find any mistakes in the decisions made by the soldiers. I think that with the information known at the time, the right action was taken. There is no doubt, however, that we are responsible for the outcome under the circumstances, and we all regret it.

Since the cease-fire, there has been no IDF fire inside or outside the security zone. I know there was a report that we shelled. There was SLA [South Lebanese Army] firing inside the security zone but not outside it. It is strange that Hizballah rushed to announce that it sustained casualties in the firing. It is interesting how terrorists reached the security zone so quickly. I will be surprised if that report is correct. I hope that the new situation following last night's cease-fire will be upheld and that Hizballah and its partners will uphold it over time.

When we started the operation, we said that when it ends, Hizballah will know that there is a heavy price to be paid for the irresponsible way it behaved in shelling Israel. We said the price that Hizballah and the area in which it operated unrestricted will be forced to pay will be very high, and it will have to decide whether the price was worth it. I hope that when it assessed its losses today, Hizballah realized that it caused itself and the surrounding area great harm. I assume it knows that the price it will have to pay next time if it goes back to shelling will be at least the same as it paid this time. I cannot speak for Hizballah, but I believe it should clearly understand what shelling on the Galilee will bring upon it and the area from which it operates.

The northern area in the range of the fighting paid a price, mainly in damage to property as well as in casualties, and I wish the injured a speedy recovery. The north behaved exceptionally. It remained steadfast and, if necessary, it would have stood firm longer in order to complete the mission.

The farmers and the towns rather quickly found ways for life to go on. I believe that life in the north can return to normal very quickly as of tomorrow morning. I hope the north will know peace for an extended period.

We will study the operation and draw the necessary conclusions after assessing all the data. There were relatively large forces involved in the operation. All the Northern Command units that participated in the operation, as well as the Intelligence Branch, the Air Force, and the Navy, worked together and did a very good job. We had very few misunderstandings among ourselves during the operation. The coordination between the commands and the forces in the field was very good. I am sure we will learn from the conclusions to be drawn. I wish to thank all those who contributed to bringing the operation to an end that gives us a chance to bring quiet to the Galilee for a long time to come. Thank you.

[Ya'alon] To sum up the operation, we can say — although not with total accuracy because of the need to study the figures — that 170-200 Lebanese civilians died, including approximately 110 in the tragic event in Qana. We believe that over 50 terrorists were killed and several dozen wounded. Hizballah continues to hide the numbers. The example given by the chief of staff is something we have known in the past experience. In the coming days, Hizballah will probably find various excuses to release reports about additional fatalities in various incidents in order not to give accurate figures about its casualties in this operation. During the operation, five Lebanese Army soldiers were killed and approximately 20 wounded. Two Syrian soldiers were killed and six wounded. All those casualties occurred during antiaircraft fire by the Lebanese Army or Syrian forces in Lebanon at our forces. Ten UNIFIL [UN Interim Force in Lebanon] soldiers were injured, some from our forces and some in incidents with Hizballah.

The activity of the various elements during the operation: Hizballah fired katyushas throughout the day and along the entire front — 60-80 at the outset of the operation and down to 25 toward its conclusion — with the aim of hitting civilians in the Galilee and the security zone. It used built-up areas to launch katyushas, preferring proximity to UN camps, mosques, schools, and hospitals — areas we keep away from in our shelling. The SLA [South Lebanese Army] intervened in the operation when antiaircraft fire was opened — especially against helicopters — at the outset of the operation. It prevented the entry of Hizballah activists into the south and prevented Hizballah shelling from areas close to Lebanese Army camps. The Syrian forces in Lebanon opened antiaircraft fire in various instances at our aircraft in the al-Biqa' and in the Beirut area. Iran supplied ammunition during the operation in Iranian military aircraft flown from Iran to Damascus airport and then brought by truck to Lebanon. Katyushas were transferred to Hizballah from Jibril's organization with Syrian permission or instructions.

Hizballah does not like the agreement because it restricts it more than the 1993 understandings did, but it praises it mainly because the organization is not limited in continuing to operate against the IDF and the SLA in the security zone. In my view, Hizballah will try to erode the agreement and look for excuses to do so, as it did with the 1993 understandings that followed Operation Accountability. The extent of the erosion will be determined by the Syrian interest and by the effectiveness of the supervisory mechanism, which is a new element in the agreement, as well as by our reaction and deterrent capability.

I would say that two elements are interested in removing Hizballah and other terrorist organizations from Lebanon. One says it openly and acts against it, and that element is Israel. The other showed during the negotiations and the operation that it does not dare to say so openly, although it is interested in this, and that element is the Lebanese Government. This is because it is clear to the Lebanese Government that disarming Hizballah and other organizations is contrary to Syria's interest at the moment, and as long as there is no peace accord with Israel, that interest remains intact. Such a move would also be against the interest of Iran, which tries to pull the strings in operating Hizballah in Lebanon. The Lebanese Government remembers what happened to those who tried to rebel against Syrian dictates in Lebanon and signed a peace accord with us. That is why we do not believe that there is any chance at present that the Lebanese Government will change its policy, although the activity of Hizballah and the other organizations is contrary to its interests.

The decision on who is responsible for reconstructing south Lebanon is very important. Following Operation Accountability and because of the weakness of the Lebanese Government, the main element that took over in south Lebanon was Iran, with Hizballah's help. That helped strengthen Hizballah's control of the area. The new agreement contains a mechanism that is supposed to deal with the rehabilitation of south Lebanon, and we hope that it will be done with different money and will not come under Iranian influence.

During the operation, we attacked many targets. Even before we hold debriefings I can say that, as far as we know, all the targets attacked were those we had planned to attack. The attacks were the result of a great deal of work by many people in the Intelligence Branch, were carried out with precision by the Air Force and the Northern Command, and took many elements into account. These included decisions on whether to attack infrastructures and civilian elements on the basis of the operation's aims. Thank you.

[Unidentified correspondent] General Shahaq, this is election time, and the government is obviously showing off the achievements of this agreement while the opposition says it is a striking failure on the government's part. Is your unequivocal backing of the political echeion not a somewhat sensitive move for the army at this time?

[Shahaq] We do not live in a vacuum. We live in a time that is not influenced by the upcoming elections. I believe it is our duty to say what we know about the security in the north as a result of the agreement. I tried to state clearly what I understand the agreement to include or not include. I reiterate that what is most important is what happens on the ground — not that the agreement is unimportant — and we will have to wait and see what happens.

[Jerusalem Channel 1 Television's Dan Scemama] On whom are we depending to make sure that Hizballah does not respond if civilians are hit by us when we react to Hizballah shelling? Another question to Gen. Ya'alon: You announced that the Intelligence Branch did not know about the presence of refugees in Qana and that it had only general knowledge about the presence of refugees near UN camps. Do we have an intelligence problem?

[Shahaq] It is incorrect to say that Hizballah is not mentioned by name in the agreement. You ask with whom we made the agreement. It is clear with whom the agreement was made. It is first of all an agreement with the Lebanese Government. I believe that anybody listening to the sounds emanating from Lebanon hears that the Lebanese understand not only that they have a responsibility but also that they have a chance they did not have before to control that part of their country. Syria is also a party to the agreement. We know the Syrians can influence Hizballah. The fact is that since this agreement went into effect, no katyushas have landed in the Galilee. That shows that somebody does have an influence on Hizballah. We knew that before the agreement. The agreement also has other partners: the United States and other states, which will have to see how it develops. I do not know Hizballah's considerations, as I believe it was mistaken before the operation, but it knew it was taking risks when it carried out the insane attacks aimed at killing us and decided they were worth it. I have already said that Hizballah understands that the price it will have to pay for a return to its previous behavior is very high. That is why I have no doubt that the Syrians and Lebanese know how to influence it and that that influence can work. Still, we will have to wait and see what impact that influence has.

[Ya'alon] On the regrettable incident in Qana: Several days before the incident, UNIFIL reported to us that approximately 5,000- 6,000 people were living around their camps. When we asked what camps, their response was that they could not go into details and could provide us only with general information. Several days earlier, we saw the site from the air, and there was no sign of people congregated around or inside the camp. On the day of the incident, we had no intelligence information to the contrary, and there was no reason to assume that anything new had happened. Our instructions before and after we knew that there were refugees in some of the camps were clear-cut and specific about what targets could be shelled and what the safety range was. The control systems by those doing the shelling and the intelligence elements in the Northern Command worked accurately, and the reason for the shelling was justified. The hits were mostly accurate. We have reports that the mortars were hit, and the mortar operators were apparently also hit. To our regret, however, a small number of shells overshot their mark. Even had we photographed the camp several hours earlier, we would not have spotted the refugees because they were in two covered sheds.

[Unidentified HA'ARETZ correspondent] Gen. Ya'alon, how do you assess Hizballah's capability from the point of view of ammunition, katyushas, and activity in the field should the agreement collapse? Gen. Levin, from your point of view, what was not achieved in this operation? Are you pleased with the agreement, and can you tell us in brief what was not achieved?

[Ya'alon] Following the operation and the agreement, Hizballah can continue to conduct its activities in the security zone: roadside attacks, shelling outposts with mortars and sagger missiles, antiaircraft fire at our planes, suicide attacks, car bombs, etc. We did not damage that capability, and we had no intention of doing so. It will have to think twice, however, before it violates the agreement by firing katyushas or harming civilians in northern Israel and the security zone.

[Levin] The aim of the operation was not to totally stop katyusha shelling. That is apparently an impossible task unless we enter the terrain and expand the security zone, which we have no plans to do. The aim was to stop the katyusha shelling at the Galilee settlements or at the residents of south Lebanon. As the agreement was reached only a short time ago, we must wait and see the results on the ground and whether Hizballah will refrain from shelling. That is why I do not have a clear-cut answer at the moment. We knew we couldn't prevent the firing of individual katyusha shells. We wanted to reduce the shelling even during the operation, and we succeeded in that. We might have been able to reduce it further, but with the restraints and restrictions we imposed on ourselves, such as not hitting the United Nations and doing as little harm to civilians as possible, that is what could be achieved.

[IDF Radio's Yaron Deqel] When Operation Accountability ended three years ago, the SLA and Gen. Lahd didn't like the agreement reached. What is their position now? Isn't there a danger of the agreement's hurting the SLA's status and perhaps leading to its disbandment because of the fear that it will lead to our withdrawal from south Lebanon?

[Shahaq] What worried the SLA and the residents of the security zone in 1993 was that they were not mentioned. Israeli settlements and settlements beyond the security zone were mentioned. Today, it is completely clear that all the villages in south Lebanon, both inside the security zone and north of it, are included in the understanding that civilian areas are off limits. An attack on the SLA is like an attack on us in the security zone. It has the right to self-defense and the ability to react to those who attack it. The main problems in south Lebanon are not those related to the operation. There are other things worrying the population of the security zone. I believe they emerged from the operation stronger and more secure.

[Unidentified MA'ARIV correspondent] I have three short questions. One: If our forces are shelled from an area close to some village tomorrow, may the IDF respond after the terrorists flee into the village? Two: Did Syria, which is a party to the agreement, undertake to prevent the movement of war materiel and terrorists through its territory to south Lebanon? Three: Wouldn't it have been appropriate to appoint a more senior officer than the Chief Artillery Corps officer to investigate the Qana incident?

[Shahaq] If we come under fire, it is absolutely clear that we may respond, not against the village but against the terrorists, even if they have fled from the place from which they fired and we know where they are. We do not have any interest in killing Lebanese civilians. Contrary to Hizballah's shelling of civilian settlements with the aim of hitting civilians, we never did that before or during the operation. When we fired, we directed our fire at sites where we knew terrorists to be. That is the difference between us and Hizballah, and that is how we will continue to operate. According to the new understandings, we may continue to operate in that way without any restrictions. I also said that this was made absolutely clear to the Syrians and, via them, to others orally and in the letter attached to the agreement.

Nobody, including the Syrians, signed anything. Syria did not sign anything that says it will expel the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] headquarters from Damascus, disarm Ahmad Jibril, sever its relations with Iran, or not permit Iranians to land at Damascus airport. The agreement is not a peace accord. It is aimed at providing answers to the problems that existed in south Lebanon and in northern Israel. I said the agreement concludes by saying that there is still a great deal to do in other fields, but those understandings are not signed.

As for the Qana incident, I do not know what a more senior officer means. I believe that the Chief Artillery Corps officer is very senior and very professional. He did not work on his own; he worked with a group of people. I have no need for anybody more senior. We will investigate everything. By the way, somebody more junior could also have done the job. We all presented our views about the tragic outcome. Whether we wanted it or not, that event affected our use of fire during the operation. None of us could ignore a situation in which dozens of civilians were killed by our fire, even if Hizballah was primarily responsible. That is why we will investigate everything that must be investigated. If anything very surprising crops up during the investigation, we may expand it and consider whether someone else should be added, but that is not the situation at the moment.

Israel: Peres—'Paper Is Better Than Armies' for Keeping Cease-Fire

LD2704195996 Paris France-2 Television Network in French 1800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The cease-fire concluded yesterday solves nothing in fact on the fundamental issues between Israel and the Hizballah militias in southern Lebanon. [passage omitted]

This morning, before returning to Paris, French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette met Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres. Charles Enderlin reports.

[Enderlin] A glass of wine from Galilee, perhaps to mark the end of Operation Grapes of Wrath: Shim'on Peres received Herve de Charette in his Jerusalem home this morning. On Lebanon too, France and Israel seem to be almost on the same wavelength:

[Begin recording] [Peres] I think that all of us are seeking tranquillity and safety for everyone, and that it may be a foreword for a permanent peace agreement.

[Unidentified correspondent] On the ground, will there be U..S and French soldiers to supervise the cease-fire?

[Peres] If there is tranquility, if there will be tranquillity [as heard], we do not need armies.

[Correspondent] Thank you very much.

[Peres] Paper is better than armies.

[De Charette] But it has undoubtedly been above all — for me and for the Israeli prime minister — an opportunity this morning to reaffirm the solidity and the force of the bonds of friendship that exist between France and Israel. [end recording] [passage omitted]

Israel: Baraq Assesses Lebanon Operation, Cease-Fire Accord

TA2804073596 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[Telephone interview with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq by correspondents Ya'el Qovetz and Mikha Friedman; place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Qovetz] Throughout Operation Grapes of Wrath Israel has been saying that contrary to the understandings achieved following Operation Accountability, this time everything will be explicitly written down. Now we see that there are verbal commitments and an accompanying letter which are not included in the a'reement. Is it possible that the agreement is not explicit enough after all?

[Baraq] I do not think you are describing things accurately. We launched this operation because the 1993 understandings, which were good in themselves, have been violated by Hizballah over the last six months in a bid to torpedo the peace process at Iran's behest. They have done this by firing katyusha rockets at the Galilee. We launched the operation primarily to put an end to the katyusha attacks on the Galilee and to guarantee the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] freedom of action. In order to expand and clarify these points it was desirable to put them down in writing — and so they were. These understandings, contrary to the previous ones, have been written down. The accompanying letter is also written. Do you think it was written on ice?

[Qovetz] It is written, but Syria is not bound by it.

[Baraq] Nobody signed the documents, which amount to understandings achieved by the United States following intensive negotiations with the sides involved. I have no doubts that all the sides realize exactly what we are dealing with here.

[Friedman] Yitzhaq Mordekhay, today a senior Likud Knesset candidate, and formerly an officer who served under you as commander of the IDF Northern Command, criticized the agreement in the following words:

[Begin Mordekhay recording] I am afraid this agreement will not withstand the test of reality, because it fails to provide additional security to the northern settlements and certainly to the IDF soldiers fighting in the security zone. It also fails to help the SLA [South Lebanese Army] soldiers in the security zone. It also fails to burden the Lebanese Government with the duty of neutralizing Hizballah, and in this way to neutralize the main problem that exists in Lebanon today. [end recording]

[Friedman] From Mordekhay's comments I can deduce that the former general staff is divided on the merits of the new agreement.

[Baraq] In my opinion, these remarks are best explained by the present political affiliations of the person who made them. I do not think he is correct. This agreement achieved all its aims — namely, an end to the katyusha attacks on the Galilee. Basically, what we achieved here is a Lebanese, Syrian, and American agreement to do everything to prevent katyusha attacks on the Galilee. I think there is a broad commitment here not only to the Galilee, but to Israel in its entirety, and this commitment goes beyond katyushas to include other weapons. The agreement gives the IDF soldiers more freedom of action than they had in the July 1993 understandings. This goes beyond the ability to return fire to the sources of the fire to include an understanding that the indirect sources of the operations — homes in which bombs are prepared; command and control centers; places where Hizballah squads organize and operate, even if they are in the villages — should also be dealt with. The Lebanese should do this themselves, but if they fail to do this, we will do it.

For the first time we have achieved an agreed upon supervisory mechanism which will accompany these understandings and which we can address whenever we want to. Therefore, despite the fact that the test will be in the implementation — and it is very possible that Hizballah will attempt to test this agreement by continuing to act occasionally, seeing that this organization has not simply evaporated — we currently have understandings that are much better than the 1993 understandings. I believe that we have good chances of maintaining calm in the Galilee, and this is the main goal of the operation.

[Friedman] Israel has often said that the key to calm in the north is held by Syria. Following the written agreement and the verbal Syrian-American understanding that Syria guarantee that Hizballah is curbed, would you say that Syria's interest at present is to maintain calm in our northern border and the security zone?

[Baraq] I believe that Syria is interested in honoring the understandings achieved. We know that real calm — that is, an almost total end to Hizballah operations — accompanied our talks with Syria. It is very possible that if this agreement acts as a lever for the resumption of talks with Syria calm will prevail for a longer period. I suggest we harbor no illusions that nothing will happen in the Galilee any longer. In Lebanon we are always striving to attain temporary goals. We have already seen what happened when the Israeli leadership tried to attain a complete and final solution to the Lebanon problem. To this very day we are still there.

Israel: Peres — Stability of Lebanon Accord Depends on Syria Talks

TA2804181496 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 28 Apr 96

[Video report by political correspondent Nisim Mish'al]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said that Israel may withdraw from Hebron in stages. Our political correspondent said that according to the plan, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will withdraw from Hebron only after the elections.

This evening, the prime minister arrived in Washington for a short visit. On his way to the United States, Peres declared that he will seek to retain the defense portfolio in his next government. Prime Minister Peres was accompanied by our political correspondent Nisim Mish'al.

[Mish'al] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres landed in Washington after a long, 14-hour flight. During the flight, the prime minister told assembled news correspondents that the stability of the document of understandings in Lebanon depends on the resumption of the negotiations with Syria. In other words, if the negotiations resume, the northern border will be quiet. If this is not the case, Peres explained, trouble will start to brew a few months after the Israeli elections.

As for those Labor Party officials who are busy speculating about the future division of government portfolios, the prime minister solved an important piece of the political puzzle today. Shim'on Peres said that until peace is achieved, it is important that the prime minister also serve as defense minister. In other words, if Peres wins the elections, the defense portfolio is already taken. [passage omitted]

Israel: Or—Syria Allowing Katyushas Supply to Hizballah

BR2604130796 Milan PANORAMA in Italian 2 May 96 pp 106-108

[Interview with Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Ori Or by Fiamma Nirenstein in Tel Aviv; date not given: "High Price of Survival" — first paragraph is PANORAMA introduction]

[FBIS Translated Text] He was "Aluf pikud ha zafon," that is, commander of the Northern Forces, immediately after the 1982 war in Lebanon. Now Ori Or is deputy defense minister, and his direct superior is Prime Minister Shim'on Peres, who has also taken on the post of defense minister, as Yitzhaq Shamir did. So Or is at the moment the Israeli prime minister's alter ego with regard to everything having to do with Lebanon, Hizballah, and every difficult diplomatic action since the Qana massacre. PANORAMA interviewed him in his office in Tel Aviv, in the heart of the Kiria, the stronghold of the military and the secret services.

[Nirenstein] Israel has caused trouble for itself. In retrospect, would it not have been better to avert this war?

[Or] First, do not call it a war. For our part, it is merely a response to a sequence of aggressions on the population of the north.

[Nirenstein] But this is not the first time that katyusha rockets have fallen on Qiriat Sh'mona. Why is the response occurring right now? Did Peres want to appear strong, 40 days before the elections?

[Or] This is a petty and parochial interpretation. The elections have nothing to do with it. Hizballah, especially since the Sharm-al-Shaykh summit on terrorism, have carried out an outright escalation of violence. They have condemned our citizens to a state of constant suffering, wretchedness, and despair — even hysteria. Not to mention the woundings and killings. You must understand that we Israelis are very concerned about our civilians: We will not abandon an Israeli in danger, wherever he may be, following the Holocaust — especially not within our own national borders. No prime minister has done what Peres has done. He had no other choice.

[Nirenstein] But following the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] attacks on buses in Israel Peres held back considerably. Why not now?

[Or] Because here every diplomatic attempt has already failed. The United States employed its good offices to make Syria's al-Asad — the only real master of Lebanon — silence the Katyushas. But the Damascus leader remained silent, and refused to prevent Iran from continuing to supply the Hizballah; he did not make the Lebanese Government intervene. According to our information — and I grant this information to PANORAMA as an exclusive — in the past few days, even after the Qana disaster, Syria has agreed to allow the Hizballah to be supplied with more Katyushas.

[Nirenstein] Who told you so?

[Or] It does not matter: But it does mean that nobody has taken account of the safety of Lebanon's civilian population.

[Nirenstein] Least of all Israel, do you not think?

[Or] That is not true. We asked that the population of southern Lebanon be evacuated, but they did not do so. We evacuated ours. We did fire, it is true, and we hit a target that was certainly not our intended one — civilians. But we did not know that there were refugees in that UN base. True, we did fire. But the murderers are the Hizballah, who hid among civilians and tried to perpetrate a massacre.

[Nirenstein] How is it possible that the legendary Israeli army, which carried out surgical operations, never missing a window in the skyscraper, made such an error? Is there a crisis within the army?

[Or] No, we responded with our artillery — an insufficiently accurate weapon. The alternative would have been to drive out the Hizballah from that position using our infantry.

[Nirenstein] The charge is widely made that you presume to do all that you can from the air and with your artillery to save the lives of your soldiers, whereas you should have the courage to send in your infantry...

[Or] It is not true: That would have been a political decision; it would have entailed occupying the territory. And we do not want to occupy militarily an area that belongs to Lebanon by law and that is, moreover, infested with Hizballah. We only want to prevent the Katyushas from threatening the lives of our civilians.

[Nirenstein] Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri says that the only way to stop the Hizballah is to evacuate the security zone.

[Or] Al-Hariri knows he is lying: Hizballah, and Iran behind them, with al-Asad's complicit silence, would immediately turn the area into a guerrilla penetration zone. When I was in command of the Northern Forces I conducted long negotiations with the Lebanese Government over the possibility of their Army taking responsibility for the area. The Lebanese refused, and they forced us to remain.

[Nirenstein] Al-Hariri says that it is impossible to disarm the Hizballah.

[Or] Have they ever tried? They were successful with the Amal shiites and with the Druses.

[Nirenstein] Al-Hariri believes that the civilian population identifies, at least partly, with the Hizballah.

[Or] That is pure cynicism. I really would like to know whether al-Hariri ever went to Qana before. If so, why does he not throw out Hizballah? Why did the Arabs not act promptly in demanding an end to the attacks on Israel?

[Nirenstein] Are you saying that there is substantial Syrian and Lebanese complicity with Hizballah?

[Or] There is an attitude of understanding.

[Nirenstein] But Hizballah is chiefly dependent on Iran, which now seems to be on a collision course with the Arab world.

[Or] That is true. Fundamentalism is the greatest enemy of the Islamic world — even more so than ours. Nevertheless Syria still has strong ties with Iran.

[Nirenstein] That is partly your fault. You used to be very strong in the area. Now al-Asad has become the master of both peace and war; the United States no longer supports you so closely; and the Russians and French are distancing themselves.

[Or] Al-Asad has kept as his strategic card the force that could have spared everyone violence. He did not attend the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. What can we do about that? We are seeking peace at a possible price.

[Nirenstein] Do you not think that the peace process now faces its most serious danger?

[Or] No, it will continue as always, amid halts and upheavals. But 'Arafat wants it, we want it, and the entire Middle East knows that it is the only possible path.

Israel: Special Knesset Session on Lebanon Operation 1 May

TA2804123396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss has decided to convene the Knesset on 1 May for a special recess session on Operation Grapes of Wrath. Our correspondent Yo'el Nir reports that the Knesset is being convened at the request of the government and the Likud and National Religious Party factions. Major General Moshe Ya'alon, head of the Intelligence Branch, will brief the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on the operation on 30 April.

Israel: Shelling Continues in Galilee Despite Cease-Fire Reports

TA2604143996 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1420 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Although an agreement for a cease-fire in Lebanon has been reached, the shelling continues on both sides of the northern border. Our military correspondent Avi Lifschitz reports:

[Lifschitz] Residents of the north received the reports about a cease-fire with reservations. A short time ago, explosions of shelling were heard in the Galilee Panhandle when four or five katyushas landed in the area. Luckily, there were no casualties and no damage was caused. The exchange of fire also continues in south Lebanon. Air Force aircraft and helicopters bombed targets in the western sector at noon, and the Israeli Navy participated in attacks along the coastline.

Until the cease-fire goes into effect late tonight or tomorrow morning, the fighting continues at the same moderate levels it has taken in the past few days.

We recall that following every Israeli military operation in Lebanon over the past 20 years, the terrorists have always fired katyushas at northern settlements after a cease-fire agreement was announced in order to have the last word. Residents have therefore been told to remain in shelters.

Israel: Shelling Continues in Galilee Following Cease-Fire Accord

TA2604163896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1600 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Katyusha shelling continues in the western Galilee, where six salvos landed in the last few hours. The most recent volley landed only a few minutes ago. Our correspondent Moti 'Eden reports that nobody was hurt and no damage was caused.

The Galilee Panhandle has now been quiet for an hour, after four salvos landed this afternoon. A man suffered shock and was given medical treatment. Our correspondent Ilan Ro'e reports that nine katyusha salvos landed in the Galilee Panhandle today.

The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] has called on the residents of the northern border to remain in shelters. The residents are asked to be patient because further shelling is expected.

Israel: IDF Denies Lebanon Radio Reports of Firing at Villages

TA2704161796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1600 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] spokesman flatly denies the Voice of Lebanon report that the IDF shelled Lebanese villages, including the abandoned village of Sujud in the al-Tuffah area, with mortars this afternoon. The spokesman's announcement says that an IDF unit fired inside the security zone and not outside it while training in opening traffic axes. The Voice of Lebanon report is baseless, the IDF said. Our monitor Mickey Gurdus reports that the Voice of Lebanon announcement did not mention casualties.

Israel: IDF Report Finds Shells Strayed at Qana, Justifies Decision

TA2704143796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1400 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The report by the officer who investigated the shelling at Qana, which was aimed at rescuing an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] unit, found that the shelling was justified but that the first two shells missed their target and hit civilians. A report presented to the chief of staff said the decision by the person who ordered the shelling was correct.

Our military affairs correspondent Karmela Menashe has learned that it appears that no measures will be taken against those who made the decisions. Military sources said that there were some discrepancies, however, and that these would be studied.

Israel: Hizballah Cell Arrested on Way to South America

TA2804045696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] First to a report from South America, where a Hizballah terrorist cell said to be on its way to carry out an attack on a Jewish institution, has been arrested at the borders of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. Security sources say the cell was stopped by border authorities last night. They said Hizballah was given the go-ahead by Iran to launch terrorist attacks against Israeli and Jewish organizations abroad after the Israeli air strikes against Beirut. The sources noted that Hizballah is being helped in its activities abroad by Iranian intelligence, and several planned attacks have been foiled. They add that during Operation Grapes of Wrath, Iran supplied Hizballah with arms and ammunition on jumbo jets which landed in Damascus with Syrian approval.

Israel: Iran Reportedly Behind 2 Attempted Attacks in Jerusalem

TA2804115696 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 28 Apr 96 p 22

[Report by Yosi Levi]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] "Iran was behind the radical Islamic organizations that sent two terrorists to carry out suicide attacks in Jerusalem in the past two weeks. Although the two cases and the two terrorists were not directly linked to each other, their arrival in Jerusalem at this time of tension in Lebanon was no coincidence."

This observation was made last week by a senior intelligence source in a conversation with MA'ARIV. The source added that the two incidents in East Jerusalem are proof that the intelligence warnings anticipating terror attacks had been accurate. The source assessed that the rejectionist organizations will persevere in their attempts to carry out terror attacks in the near future. [passage omitted]

Israel: Hizballah Camps in South Africa, Nigeria Formally Protested

TA2904051196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 29 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Israel has submitted formal complaints to the Governments of South Africa and Nigeria after receiving information that there are five Hizballah camps in South Africa and one in Nigeria. Israel also received information of a camp in northern Iraq, near the Turkish border.

In addition to this, an extremist Islamic group, the Mujahidin, which is active in Bosnia, is reportedly about to move operations into Lebanon. Qol Yisra'el's reporter says that the Mujahidin is directed by Iran, which trains and funds it. The group was especially active in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion there.

Recently Israel rejected a request from a Bosnian delegation to visit because of the group's activities. Israel had conditioned the trip on the establishment of diplomatic ties with Bosnia and the expulsion of the Mujahidin from there.

The deputy director general of the Foreign Ministry, Eytan Bentzur, has held a special discussion on the information in order for the relevant embassies to convey it to their respective governments.

Israel: Peres—Hizballah, Iran Planning Attacks on Targets Abroad

TA2904092896 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 29 Apr 96 pp A1, A2

[Report by Aluf Ben and Eytan Rabin]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres yesterday said in a news conference at the Pentagon that a Hizballah squad has recently been detained in Europe — this, in addition to the squad caught last week along the border between Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. Peres said Israel has received information that Hizballah and Iran have planned to attack Israeli and Jewish targets abroad.

Yesterday Peres had a phone conversation with Argentine President Carlos Menem and updated him on the details of the agreement of understandings in Lebanon. The two did not discuss the detention of the Hizballah squad on the Argentine border.

Sources in the defense establishment confirm that several Hizballah attacks in Europe have been foiled — this, in addition to the foiled attack in South America. A senior government source yesterday said that these attempts resulted from a clear Iranian directive given in a meeting between Hizballah heads and the heads of the Iranian intelligence. He said that between five to seven terrorists who planned to carry out attacks abroad have been detained.

The source added that the decision to attack Israeli targets was adopted immediately following the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] firing on the Hizballah headquarters in West Beirut and was reinforced following the Qana incident. He also said that Iran is encouraging the attacks and has even helped the terrorists reach their destination abroad by, among other things, counterfeiting their passports.

The senior source noted that Israel is exchanging information with foreign intelligence elements in a bid to foil future attacks. Defense establishment sources emphasize that there are urgent warnings about attempts to attack Israeli targets and institutions abroad, and that consequently guard duty around them will be tightened. A report on the detention of the squad has also been relayed to the United States. [passage omitted]

Israel: IDF Deploys Elite Troops at Jordan, Egypt Border Crossings

TA2904111996 Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew 29 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by On Levi]

[FBIS Translated Text] Anticipating terrorist attacks along the borders, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] is using combat troops to man international crossings at the Jordanian and Egyptian borders. The soldiers have been instructed to act with the utmost alertness.

The defense establishment has recently received increasing information on Hizballah and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] plans to carry out terrorist attacks at the Jordanian and Egyptian border crossings. Soldiers deployed at the crossings are from crack infantry units.

The IDF beefed up its deployment along the Jordanian and Egyptian borders after receiving information on terrorists' plans to infiltrate into Israel and carry out terror acts to avenge the IDF operation in Lebanon.

Israel: Police Launch 'Operation Deadline' as Terror Attacks Feared

TA2904114096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1005 GMT 29 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Police Commissioner Asaf Hefetz says that as the Israeli elections draw near, there are designs to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel in a bid to sway the results of the ballots. In view of this, the police forces will be reinforced in order to maintain order and protect the integrity of the election campaign. Our police affairs correspondent Aviv Bushinsky reports:

[Begin recording] [Bushinsky] Police Operation Deadline 1996, which aims to maintain order and security and to ensure the integrity of the elections under the law, has been launched. Over 20,000 policemen, Border Police members, and Civil Guard volunteers will be deployed in more than 6,000 ballot sites on election day.

[Hefetz] We know that several terrorist attacks were perpetrated in response to the decision to hold early elections, and we believe that attacks were carried out in order to influence the outcome of the elections. We are acting on the premise that additional attempts will be made to influence the elections through one kind of terrorist attack or another. We must be prepared for that. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Israel: Total Closure on Territories Lifted

TA2804050996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The total closure imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip just before Independence Day was lifted at 0400 this morning [0100 GMT]. However, all limitations that were in effect prior to the total closure will remain in force. This includes the ban on the entry of residents of the West Bank and Gaza into Israel, except for Palestinian workers who have work permits. In addition, Palestinian officials and humanitarian cases will be allowed entry into Israel.

Israel will carry out several goodwill gestures for 'Id al-Adha. Among other things, Israeli Arabs will be allowed to enter self-rule areas to celebrate the Muslim holiday there; factories at Erez will be open as normal today, and work permits will be granted to an additional 2,000 workers from Gaza. From today, laborers above the age of 40 will be permitted to work in Israel — an estimated 7,500 workers. Produce will also be allowed to cross into Israel from Gaza and vice versa. More than 180,000 Muslims and Druze in Israel will begin celebrating 'Id al-Adha this morning.

Israel: Peres Rejects Request To Delay Hebron Redeployment

TA2804053896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres has rejected a request from SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] spiritual leader Rabbi 'Ovadya Yosef to postpone the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] redeployment in Hebron until after the May 29 elections. The rabbi wrote in the letter to the prime minister that he is concerned about the security of Jewish residents of Hebron. Peres replied that the Palestinian Authority has kept to its agreements with Israel and it is fighting terrorism and has amended the Palestinian covenant. He said the IDF will continue to safeguard the Jewish Quarter, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and the main roads between them. But, the prime minister added, the exact date for the withdrawal of soldiers from the rest of the city has not yet been decided.

A senior security source said the government has still not informed the IDF when a redeployment of troops will take place in Hebron. But he says the army expects instructions sometime this week. IDF officers are scheduled to discuss the Hebron pullout with the Palestinian police next weekend, after the Muslim holiday period.

Representatives of an observers delegation from Norway are due to arrive in Hebron today to begin setting up their headquarters.

Israel: Peres on Hebron Redeployment, Lebanon Understandings

TA2804111296 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1000 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The prime minister says that the date for the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] redeployment in Hebron has still not been decided. Peres noted, however, that the redeployment may be implemented in stages. Our correspondent Udi Segal reports from the plane carrying the prime minister to the United States.

[Begin Segal recording] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres today confirmed that Israel may evacuate Hebron in several stages. The first stage has already started: the entrance of the first contingent of Norwegian observers to the city. The second stage will apparently comprise of the entrance of unarmed Palestinian civilian inspectors. Only during the third stage will the IDF redeploy outside the city. Peres says that the final date for the evacuation of Hebron has still not been determined.

Referring to the agreement of understandings resulting in the cease-fire in south Lebanon, Peres said that the supervisory committee will hold its discussions along the Israeli-Syrian border or the Israeli-Lebanese border. The parties involved in the committee — Israel, Lebanon, Syria, the United States, and France — will send envoys at the ambassadorial level for dealing with civilian issues, and military attaches for dealing with security issues.

The prime minister said that the Lebanese Government has already started acting against Hizballah. Peres said there are reports that the Lebanese Army prevented firing attempts, confiscated weapons, and even detained several persons.

Mr. Peres will land in Washington in less than an hour. [end recording]

Israel: Deputy Minister Or in Stable Condition After Heart Attack

TA2704192996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1900 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Deputy Defense Minister Ori Or had a heart attack and is hospitalized at Haifa's Karmel Hospital. His condition is reported to be stable.

Jordan: Iraqi Attempt To Assassinate al-Kabariti Reportedly Aborted

JN2804105596 Amman AL-BILAD in Arabic
1 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordanian security authorities aborted a recent attempt by a group of Iraqis to assassinate Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti.

Information revealed that security authorities managed to arrest the group, which apparently was planning to carry out bombing operations in some sensitive areas of Jordan and against tourist buses. The group was also planning to assassinate the prime minister.

According to the information, Jordanian authorities recently tightened searches at the Jordanian-Iraqi border. No Iraqi is allowed entry into Jordan before knowing everything about him and the nature and venue of his visit. Moreover, Jordan banned the entry of letters, cassette tapes, or any other equipment for fear that they could contain messages to Iraqi sabotage groups in Jordan.

Iraq also has escalated its searches. Information reveals that security authorities there are destroying all equipment and letters carried by Iraqis traveling to Jordan for fear of a leak of information on the internal situation to the Iraqi opposition in Amman.

Jordan: Al-Mu'ashshir Interviewed on Iraq, Arab Relations

JN2704170096 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic
27 Apr-3 May 96 pp 6, 35

[Interview with Jordanian Information Minister Dr. Marwan al-Mu'ashshir by Faysal al-Malkawi at the Information Ministry in Amman; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Al-Malkawi] Let us return to Jordan's relations with neighboring states, specifically Iraq. These relations are retreating. What are the latest developments in these relations?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] Frankly speaking, you know that Jordan has not been satisfied with the Iraqi regime's actions and violations for a long time. The situation in Iraq has become very serious. Jordan has adopted a more frank and declared stand toward these violations. This does not mean that Jordan wants to be a party to changing the Iraqi regime. We believe that the Iraqi situation is very difficult and that the great suffering in Iraq is now threatening Jordan's national security. Although Jordan believes in the need to change the Iraqi regime, it also believes that this change should be accomplished by the Iraqis themselves.

Regarding economic relations with Iraq, they should be dealt with away from politics. They are firm and deep-rooted relations, and we want them to continue under all circumstances.

[Al-Malkawi] Jordan allowed U.S. aircraft to overfly southern Iraq. This means that it implemented the international resolutions after five years. Are there any guarantees that Jordan will not participate in any future military action to change the Iraqi regime in accordance with the international resolutions?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] The U.S. aircraft flights over southern Iraq from Jordan should be viewed within the right framework. Jordan was not asked to implement these resolutions in the past — not that Jordan did not implement them over the past five years. Now, however, there are new circumstances for Jordan. We will obtain U.S. F-16's next year. The presence of these aircraft in and their flights from Jordan over Iraq under these circumstances will allow Jordan to modernize its military airports and train its pilots free of charge. The truth is that Jordan wanted to benefit from these new circumstances. It is Jordan that requested that these aircraft overfly southern Iraq. It should be made clear that Jordan does not want to establish U.S. military bases in Jordan. This is irrelevant, because this is only a two-month operation. It should also be made clear that Jordan will not participate in any military action against Iraq.

[Al-Malkawi] You have expelled an Iraqi diplomat on charges of carrying out intelligence activities. Can you tell us about these activities?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] We expelled the Iraqi diplomat, Husayn Faraj, based on unequivocal proof that he violated diplomatic norms and carried out many nondiplomatic activities.

[Al-Malkawi] What was the nature of these activities?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] I do not want to go into details. However, a state has the right to expel any diplomat who violates diplomatic traditions. The other two Iraqi diplomats, however, were summoned by the Iraqi Government itself. The Jordanian Government did not ask them to leave.

[Al-Malkawi] If Jordanian-Iraqi relations deteriorate further, will they reach the point of severing diplomatic relations or military confrontation between the two countries?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] We do not intend to escalate the situation militarily or diplomatically with Iraq. Our stand on the Iraqi issue is clear. This stand takes into consideration Jordan's interests and national and pan-Arab security. However, we will not take measures that will drag us into military confrontations with Iraq. As I said, changing the Iraqi regime should be accomplished by the Iraqis themselves. This explains Jordan's noninterference in Iraq's affairs. Regarding the Iraqi brothers who have recently arrived in [defected to] Jordan, they made the decision on their own, not pursuant to a request by Jordan. We do not interfere in their actions.

[Al-Malkawi] Are we to understand that certain Iraqi opposition figures lack credibility?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] We are very aware of this point. We have scores of applications to open Iraqi opposition offices in Amman. The government is turning down these applications because, in fact, we want the opposition to be credible if they want to have a presence in Amman. If it was not for our awareness, we would have had scores of Iraqi opposition offices in Amman.

[Al-Malkawi] The Palestinian National Authority [PNA] accused Jordan of sheltering Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] leaders and sponsoring terrorism. Jordan has repeatedly denied these charges. 'Arafat has also apologized repeatedly, only to go make more false accusations later. In your opinion, why does he do that, and what does he want?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] Jordan wants to maintain excellent ties with the PNA, and Jordan does not deal with anyone on the Palestinian side except the PNA. We understand that the Palestinian brothers are facing difficult conditions, especially with the collective closure. They, therefore, occasionally make statements against Jordan that they feel may help ease these difficult conditions. We, however, explained to them that we would like them to be able to resolve their problems without exporting crises and problems to us. At any rate, we are not in the process of starting a crisis with the Palestinian Authority, and we will continue to talk with the authority calmly and objectively because we have a common interest. We are both in the same boat as far as the peace process is concerned.

Everybody knows that Hamas does not maintain a presence in Jordan. First, as I said, Jordan does not recognize anyone except the Palestinian Authority. Second, Jordan does not support and has never supported military or terrorist operations against another state. Jordan would not support an organization that seeks to torpedo the peace process, of which Jordan is a primary partner. We, however, will not violate Jordanian law, which provides for any Jordanian citizen to express his free opinion, even if this opinion runs counter to that of the Jordanian Government.

[Al-Malkawi] What about other explosive issues on the path of Jordanian-Palestinian relations, such as the confederation, Jerusalem, and the granting of Jordanian citizenship?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] Undoubtedly, there are several issues that must be discussed frankly with the Palestinians. But what I want to say is that we in Jordan would like to maintain a calm and objective dialogue with the Palestinian Authority in order to keep coordination between us at a good level, especially since the Palestinian brothers are about to start negotiations on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. We do not intend to enter into fabricated crisis or into useless discussions with the PNA.

[Al-Malkawi] A few months ago, Egypt accused us of rushing toward peace. Mubarak is now accusing us of sheltering to the Repudiation and Renunciation group. How does the Jordanian Government interpret this?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] We are bound to have certain differences with Egypt every now and then. We, however, consider our relations with Egypt strategic, and we are currently consulting with it over the future of the region to create a new Middle East. This does not mean we do not have differences, but when these differences emerge, we deal with them in a calm and objective way. With regard to the Repudiation and Renunciation issue, it is clear that Jordan is not shelter this group, which is purely an Egyptian group. Its members are Egyptians. The Repudiation and Renunciation group is not affiliated with any non-Egyptian organization. Certain Egyptians citizens who are affiliated with the Repudiation and Renunciation group may come to Jordan, because Jordan does not even require Egyptian brothers who wish to visit to have visas. We can talk to the Egyptians. If they have any information to confirm their claim, then they should give it to us.

[Al-Malkawi] Is Jordan trying to assume Egypt's role in the region?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] Of course not. We are not trying to take anybody's role. We want a new era of prosperity for Jordan and the region, and there is every opportunity for that. Jordan is working to promote development and economy. This should not be interpreted in any way as an attempt to play certain roles at the expense of other states. Everybody has an opportunity to build a stable and prosperous region and to initiate an era of integration, rather than assuming certain roles at the expense of other sides.

[Al-Malkawi] Why does the Syrian leadership refuse to coordinate with Jordan, and why does Damascus level accusations against Amman from time to time? Will you please clarify the situation with Syria?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] We entered into negotiations with Israel, just as the Syrian brothers did, and both countries made the decision at the Madrid conference. Therefore, we do not see any justification for Syria to level accusations against Jordan. We do not understand such accusations, and we believe that Jordan did nothing that the Syrians did not do. However, we are always ready for coordination and consultations with Damascus. The Syrian brothers, however, should know that Jordan is working for Arab interests. The Syrians accused us of playing host to the Iraqi opposition, and we say that the Iraqi opposition exists in Syria, too.

They also misinterpreted matters by accusing Jordan of having U.S. F-16 warplanes. The brothers in Syria participated in the second Gulf war along with U.S. forces. So, there is no justification for differences with Syria, because we in Jordan did nothing that the Syrians did not do.

[Al-Malkawi] How do you view Jordanian-Saudi relations?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] I can say that relations with Saudi Arabia are now excellent, particularly since his majesty the king's recent visit to Saudi Arabia. A joint Jordanian-Saudi committee will meet soon under the cochairmanship of the two countries' trade ministers. We are extremely content with the development of relations with Saudi Arabia.

[Al-Malkawi] Why should we continue to knock on the door of the Kuwaitis, who totally reject us?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] Kuwait has its own internal situation, which is preventing the announcement of the great improvement of Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations. We leave the timing of the announcement of this improvement to the Kuwaiti brothers. Once again, we are reaching out to them. Some Kuwaiti National Assembly members voiced their refusal to restore relations with Jordan, but we in Jordan do not believe that they represent the official Kuwaiti position. Our overall relations with Kuwait are moving toward detente.

[Al-Malkawi] Will Amman and Kuwait exchange ambassadors in the near future?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] I cannot predict a timetable. This is up to the Kuwaiti brothers.

[Al-Malkawi] Why did Iran interfere in our domestic affairs? Our interior minister met with Iranians recently and told them that Iran should stop interfering in our domestic affairs.

[Al-Mu'ashshir] We asked an Iranian diplomat who had violated the diplomatic norms and traditions to leave the country. But there is no problem with Iran, and there is no need for the Jordanian Government to take certain measures.

[Al-Malkawi] Does Iran have anything to do with the terrorist operations unveiled by security officials?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] Once again, I cannot talk about this issue because it is still under investigation.

[Al-Malkawi] Thank you.

[Al-Mu'ashshir] You are welcome.

Jordan: Information Minister Welcomes Lebanese Cease-Fire Agreement

JN2704122396 Amman Radio Jordan in English 1100 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jordan has welcomed the cease-fire between Israel and Lebanon and expressed hope it will signal the resumption of peace talks between Syria and Lebanon and Israel.

Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir told Radio Jordan he hoped the cease-fire was a basis to resume peace negotiations that would enable Lebanon to regain its sovereignty over its territory as stipulated by UN Resolution 425.

[Begin al-Mu'ashshir recording] We welcome the reaching of this agreement between all the parties involved to stop the fighting in Lebanon. We hope that this will constitute now the basis to resume the peace negotiations between both Syria and Israel, and Lebanon and Israel. We hope that the Syrians will be able to resume these negotiations according to UN Resolution 242, and for Lebanon to be able to regain its sovereignty over all of its territory according to Resolution 425. [end recording]

Jordan: Cease-Fire Said To Signal 'New Phase' in Peace Process

JN2704145796 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 27 Apr 96 pp 1, 24

[Editorial: "We Welcome the Cease-fire Agreement in Lebanon]

[FBIS Translated Text] The cease-fire agreement reached in Lebanon was a pressing, essential, and strategic demand, not only by Jordan, but also by all the parties that have rejected the policy of violence and counterviolence as a bloody practice that conflicts with all human concepts and values, as well as with peace efforts and human relations.

The cease-fire agreement was concluded after 16 days of a bloody and unequal war launched by Israel against Lebanon. During this war, Israel wiped out the bulk of the infrastructure in southern Lebanon, leaving behind a scorched land where the blood of children, women, and elderly was mixed with the ashes of ruins and destruction. Lebanon, the victim, paid a dear price, while the parties that were warring on its land made political gains. Moreover, the occupation remained and the crisis was internationalized. This did not solve the pending problem, which will eventually explode with the passage of time unless the southern Lebanese question is resolved and Israel withdraws in accordance with Security Council Resolution 425.

Noting that a cease-fire agreement is no substitute for the Lebanese-Israeli peace process does not mean that a solution on the Lebanese track is imminent and that the path to progress in the peace process has become any easier. It only means that the peace process has entered a new phase of bargains and security measures.

At any rate, we hope that the cease-fire agreement — which will end the Lebanese people's suffering and the shedding of their blood on the altar of regional conflicts — will be the springboard for an effort to place Lebanon's basic interests, unity, and sovereignty above regional interests and considerations. We also hope that this will mark the beginning of a serious search for a mechanism that ensures Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, thus closing this serious loophole in the wall of peace that is being built brick by brick in accordance with mutual security guarantees for both parties to the conflict.

We in Jordan welcome the cease-fire agreement and welcome an end to the excessive use of Israeli military force against the people of southern Lebanon, whose land, cities, towns, and livelihood have been destroyed and who have been displaced from their homes. Containing the tragedy right from the start was the basis of the Jordanian move, which was made at the highest political levels permitted by the available political circumstances of the influential parties to the Lebanese crisis.

We welcome the cease-fire agreement, regardless of its preambles and provisions. We hope that it will be the beginning of the restoration of Lebanon's wellbeing and will help it break away from the cycle of violence and containment to enjoy security, stability, freedom, and national sovereignty on its land.

Jordan: Parties—Amending Palestine Charter 'Historic Capitulation'

JN2804094596 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 28 Apr 96 p 3

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman — Jordanian nationalist parties said that amending the Palestinian National Charter is an unprecedented historic capitulation in the life of peoples and living nations who fought for their national independence.

In a statement issued yesterday, the parties say that the self-rule authority's response to Peres' conditions put the fate of our national and pan-Arab cause in the hands of the enemies. The parties call for supporting the Palestinian people's just struggle for their rights, firmly adhering to the nation's constants, and getting involved in protecting the country, defending its independence, and confronting normalization with the Zionist enemy.

They add that the conflict with the enemy is still ongoing and is aggravated further whenever the capitulators take more steps to implement dictations from Washington and Tel Aviv and as long as the occupation exists and the Palestinian people have not obtained their full rights.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri To Hold News Conference on Talks 26 Apr

NC2604125796 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1241 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in from the NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY correspondent: Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri will hold a news conference at 1630 [1330 GMT] today at the Government House to announce the results of talks that he and Speaker Nabih Birri held at 1400 today with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette will arrive in Beirut at 1630. He will meet with al-Hariri as soon as he ends his news conference.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri—Cease-Fire Effective 'in Next Few Hours'

NC2604123896 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1230 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in from the NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY's correspondents: Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri has declared at the end of his talks today with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher that an agreement has been reached for a cease-fire in the next few hours.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri, Birri To Hold News Conference 'in About an Hour'

NC2604131496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1300 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in from the editors' desk: THE NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY has learned that President Bill Clinton will hold a news conference within hours to declare that a cease-fire agreement has been reached.

After their meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and Speaker Nabih Birri said they can look at issues with optimism in the next few hours. Before leaving Damascus for Israel, Christopher said tangible progress had been made. He thanked all the parties that had offered their help to reach a solution.

Al-Hariri and Birri will hold a news conference at the Government House in about an hour.

Lebanon: Christopher Meets al-Hariri, Birri in Damascus

NC2604131396 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1205 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in from the editors desk: U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher began a meeting with Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri at 1445 [1145 GMT] at al-Hariri's mansion in Damascus. They immediately began a round of talks that are not expected to be lengthy. Christopher's accompanying delegation is also attending the meeting.

Speaker Birri arrived in Damascus at 1400 today and held a brief meeting with Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam at the latter's home. Birri then proceeded to al-Hariri's home and met with him before Christopher's arrival. This is the third meeting in the past two days between Christopher, al-Hariri, and Birri.

We have just received word that the Israeli artillery is pounding 'Ayn Bu Siwar. Israeli military aircraft are flying over the area.

Lebanon: Hizballah Official on Statement on Cease-Fire Requirements

NC2604131796 Paris AFP in English 1212 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, April 26 (AFP)—Hizballah insisted Friday [26 April] that a ceasefire accord to spare civilian lives would have to guarantee its right to fight Israel's occupation of a border zone, as diplomatic efforts moved closer to a truce.

An official of the group, in a statement, said this right was among four points which had to be taken into consideration "at a time when efforts to stop the aggression on Lebanon have reached a decisive moment."

A ceasefire, he said, should include:

— "Secure and real guarantees to protect civilians in Lebanon.

— "The right of the Resistance (Hizballah's armed wing) to pursue its operations against the Zionist enemy and its agents (proxy militia in the occupied border zone).

— "The end of violation of Lebanese airspace and raids on civilian villages and populated areas.

— "Lifting of the maritime blockade of ports and fishermen in Lebanese territorial waters."

The statement went on to say that the Shiite Muslim fundamentalist Hizballah would "continue to be the spearhead of Lebanon, freedom and the dignity of its people."

Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath has killed 164 people and wounded 351, virtually all civilians, since it was launched on April 11 to stop Hizballah katyusha rocket attacks on Israel's north. Hizballah says it has lost nine guerrillas, along with four Lebanese Army soldiers and a Syrian officer also killed. The Israeli army estimates it has killed at least 50 Hizballah fighters.

Lebanon: Minister—'Resistance' Must Observe State's Sovereignty

NC2604142096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1400 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Transport Minister 'Umar Misqawi has said that the resistance in Lebanon — both by Hizballah and any other group — must not declare that it is affiliated with a certain party. He said that all parties must share in the resistance and their stand must be in line with the state's sovereignty.

Lebanon: De Charette Arrives; Cease-Fire To Be Declared Concurrently

NC2604144296 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1428 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in: French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette arrived at Beirut airport from Damascus a short while ago aboard a private French plane. He was received at the airport by the French ambassador in Beirut. They proceeded together to meet Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri at his home in Quraytim.

An Arab diplomatic source told Beirut Radio that a cease-fire will be announced in Damascus, Washington, and Jerusalem at the same time, in a short while. He said that this agreement was reached in Damascus.

Lebanon: Hizballah To Abide by Cease-Fire Agreement

NC2604150996 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1502 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] This is just in from the news desk: REUTER cited a Hizballah official a short while ago saying that the party will abide by the cease-fire agreement in Lebanon.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri Holds News Conference

NC2604154696 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1504 GMT 26 Apr 96

[News conference by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri with unidentified foreign and domestic correspondents at Government House in Beirut — live; italicized passages in English]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [al-Hariri] First, in the name of the Lebanese Government and people, I extend my condolences to the martyrs killed during the recent military operations. We wish the wounded a quick recovery.

We said from Day One that war and the use of force could not solve the problems. As you have now seen now, the solution is a political one. It would have been more appropriate to avoid all these tragedies that have befallen families, children, and women, and the losses the country has suffered. It would have been better to reach what we have reached without this fighting.

Throughout the past few days, I was in constant touch with his excellency the president, and in constant coordination with His Excellency Speaker Nabih Birri and the foreign minister, who had to travel to the United States to attend the UN General Assembly meetings. We reached an understanding.

Now I will start speaking in English. I think it is better for everybody. We had an understanding, and now, at 1800 [1500 GMT], in all capitals concerned, we are announcing the cease-fire at 0400 in the morning.

This understanding, as you know, the United States, through the secretary of state, worked hard to reach it. But first of all, France played an important role, to reach this understanding. The minister of foreign affairs, Mr. de Charette, he is with us from the first day of the military operations. I would like to thank President al-Asad of the effort he put to reach this understanding, and also I would like to thank the president of France, Mr. Chirac, at the effort and all what he done to see this understanding happen.

President al-Asad is a friend of Lebanon. We are neighbors. We have historical relations. We have a very long relation together. But for President Chirac, we have seen a real friend with us, who made all the efforts necessary to achieve the cease-fire. The Lebanese people will never forget this, and they will stand and they will cooperate with France in the future. Mr. de Charette, he left everything and he stayed with us, as one of us, [word indistinct] *with us. He spent 15 days turning between Lebanon, Tel Aviv, and Damascus. Sometimes he do this trip, three trips at one day. I know that he left lot of work. We know his responsibility, and we really appreciate all the efforts he has done and all the efforts he has put here, with all the people working with him.*

We met with the U.S. secretary today, yesterday, and the day before, and we appreciate the personal effort he put to achieve the cease-fire. We know that he worked hard with his assistants to achieve this, and, as I said in Arabic, I will repeat in English: Lebanon believes that this crisis, and all the killing we have seen and all the destruction were without any use. We have said in the first beginning that this problem cannot be solved by *force. It can be solved by negotiation, and that is exactly what happened.*

We have said that the problem of the Hizballah cannot be solved by force and it has not been solved by force. Hizballah remains intact till today, but over 200 civilians were killed. Most of them are children and women, and over 400 people were injured; also most of them are children and women. There is lot of destruction in the south and here, and electricity also. This will cost a lot of money, but this is not important; the money can always be found.

The most important thing is that we are a people trying to live peacefully. We want to see our land liberated, but we had an aggression and this aggression led to all the tragedy, everyone of you knows about it. I do not see that Israel has any interest of this. Neither Lebanon has any interest to see our country destroyed. We have over, about 500,000 people displaced; they left their homes. Many villages have been destroyed, and all these villages I do not think that Hizballah was fighting from them. We have seen in the last few days a systematic destruction to our villages, to our infrastructure.

Anyway, here we are, and this understanding we reached, we will stop the cease-fire [as heard], and the party concerned assured us. Lebanon will do its best to see this happen. Lebanon will ensure, and Israel also will ensure that no fighting toward the civilians or to the infrastructure, and no fighting will be launched from a civilian area or industrial area or school or hospital or so.

We will do our best to make sure that this will be respected. Surely, the final solution, and the permanent solution, is to see Israel leave our territory and the peace taking place all over the region. We are committed to peace. We know that we will benefit most from the peace, but it is not only up to us. It is also up to Israel to decide if it wants to live in peace in this region.

We have agreed to form a sort of committee, or monitoring group, to make sure that this understanding will be respected. This monitoring committee, consisting of United States, France, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel; this is a mechanism, will assure that nobody will violate this understanding. Beside that, there is a consultative group, will be organized as soon as possible, also consisting United States, France, the European Union, Russia, and maybe other country interested, to arrange the finance necessary to rebuild the country.

And in this understanding, there is a paragraph about the peace, and the determination of all the parties concerned. It means Lebanon and Israel, Syria and Israel, United States to work hard to achieve the peace in the region as soon as it is possible. We are committed for that. And I believe everybody in the region is. But now we have to see what happens in the south. We have to make sure that the displaced people back, and the cease-fire is taking place at 0400 [0100 GMT], in ten hours of now. This will be announced all over the countries concerned. Thank you. I think Mr. de Charette wants to say something.

[De Charette passage omitted]

[Al-Hariri] The entire Lebanese people must know that the state and the government were very eager to obtain an understanding leading to stability and to ensuring that what happened absolutely does not recur. The country has paid a heavy price for what happened in the past two weeks. We believe this understanding has completely shut the door to the possibility of a recurrence of what happened. As you noticed, some big countries are involved. In addition to the United States, we have France, Russia, the European Union, and the states of the region: Lebanon and Syria on one side and Israel on the other.

We strongly believe that this understanding will lead to long-term stability in the country. It will ensure definitive protection of civilians. Residential and industrial areas, schools, hospitals, bridges, power plants, and other such places will not be used as places for fighting. The civilian Israelis inside Israel will also be safe. This is the essence of the agreement.

[Correspondent] Will the cease-fire be supervised?

[Al-Hariri] We said that the committee, or the group of countries, will set up a monitoring mechanism. We now believe that all sides will respect the cease-fire, at present.

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] The agreement has now been announced, and these countries will soon get together and start work. Serious cease-fire agreements usually take a little time, for things to be arranged.

[Correspondent] It is being said that the losses amount to $500 million. In your opinion, is it that much?

[Al-Hariri] I believe that the greatest losses are the citizens who have been martyred and the injured people. This is the greatest loss.

[Correspondent] The conflict was, first and foremost, over how the resistance should operate and the places where it can operate from—that is one thing. Next, will the deployment of the Lebanese Army begin now, at this time, or will it be delayed until the final peace talks begin?

[Al-Hariri] The Lebanese Government is obligated to respect this understanding. Therefore, the Lebanese Government and the state will use all the means available to it to respect this understanding. On the other hand, the resistance still exists, of course, within the frameworks and policies that serve the higher national interests ,which are decided by the Lebanese Government.

[Correspondent] How about the army deployment?

[Al-Hariri] I told you that the Lebanese State guarantees the parts of the agreement that pertain to it. As for the Syrian brothers, through negotiations with them... [pauses] it is clearly mentioned in the understanding that it took place through negotiations with Syria—in other words, the United States negotiated with Syria on this agreement.

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] hope this agreement leads to complete stability?

[Al-Hariri] We don't just hope so, we know it will.

[Correspondent] [word indistinct] that this agreement has the character [words indistinct] if there is no understanding over [word indistinct] or major headlines in the politics of the post-understanding stage?

[Al-Hariri] In this stage, we believe that this agreement will lead to stability. As for final stability and comprehensive peace and security, they cannot happen except through Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese and Syrian territories and the signing of a peace agreement that clarifies all these matters. However, this agreement will undoubtedly make the situation in the country better than it was prior to it. In addition, there is a special paragraph in the agreement, in the understanding — it is not called an agreement, it is an understanding [preceding word repeated in English] — that clarifies that all parties are moving toward peace with a clear will.

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] better than the July understanding or an alternative to it?

[Al-Hariri] Let us not talk about the July understanding. This is another subject. There are some people who are saying that this understanding is more or less an agreement or a written version of the July understanding, or that it has been developed. This is an understanding in its own right. This is why we have called it an understanding.

[Correspondent] Among the states [words indistinct]?

[Al-Hariri] No, no, among the states. It is among the states. No other parties are involved in it.

[Correspondent] Has any contact been made with Hizballah [words indistinct]?

[Al-Hariri] I expect them to be watching the television. They are listening to the television.

[Correspondent] Mr. Prime Minister, there is talk that the comprehensive solution includes the implementation of Resolution 425 and the withdrawal of the occupied forces [words indistinct]. To what extent can one link this understanding to the post-cease-fire stage [word indistinct] the negotiations [word indistinct]?

[Al-Hariri] It all depends on intentions. If Israel really intends to withdraw from Lebanon and intends to establish a peace, as the officials there are saying, then this understanding could speed up the negotiations thus leading to a speedy withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon.

[Correspondent] *First of all, do you think this whole thing has added up to a defeat for Israel?*

[Al-Hariri] *I am not here to judge who has been defeated. I know that the civilians in both countries will benefit from this agreement. There is no doubt about it, from this understanding.*

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] *that this is a verbal understanding and how does it differ from the 93....*

[Al-Hariri, interrupting] *It is a written one. It is a written understanding.*

[Correspondent] *How does it differ from the 93 agreement?*

[Al-Hariri] *I do not want to compare it. It is something different. Some parties, they say this is the understanding of 1993, but it is written. I do not think so. I think it is something else.*

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] the naval blockage and airspace violations, or did it not include this issue? And was the agreement written?

[Al-Hariri] This is a written agreement. This agreement makes it clear that there can be no attacks on civilians and that civilian areas should not be used as bases for starting fighting. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] What about the 500,000 displaced persons?

[Al-Hariri] Let us first have the cease-fire.

[Correspondent] [words indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] *Excuse me?*

[Correspondent] *Does Israel still retain the right to pursue Hizballah or suspected Hizballah targets under this agreement?*

[Al-Hariri] *You know, this agreement disclude [as heard] the civilians, and disclude [as heard] the civilian area and civilian places, like, more or less, the infrastructures. But in the occupied territory, if there is any fight among soldiers from both sides, you know, as far as there is an occupation there is a resistance.*

[Correspondent] *But what about suspected Hizballah targets outside the security zone?*

[Al-Hariri] *You know, it is not that large, the understanding. I mean, nobody can use this to enlarge the attack, to violate this agreement.*

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] the resistance will continue within frameworks decided by the state.

[Al-Hariri] Within frameworks that serve the national interest.

[Correspondent] But how [words indistinct]?

[Al-Hariri] I did not say that. I did not say the state will decide. I said within frameworks that serve the national interest. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] to rebuild what has been destroyed and rebuild the infrastructure. Is there an agreement in principle by the countries on this committee?

[Al-Hariri] Of course, of course.

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] *to monitor and disarm Hizballah* [words indistinct]. *Have you said...?*

[Al-Hariri, interrupting] *We are not talking about disarming anybody. We are talking about protecting the civilians. Yes.*

[Correspondent] [words indistinct] *something. Under this understanding, are the Hizballah, providing they do not use villages, still committed to attack Israeli occupation forces in the Israeli-occupied parts of southern Lebanon? Do they have the right to...?*

[Al-Hariri, interrupting] *Yes. They have the right to fight. Yes. They have the right, in the Lebanese occupied territory. Yes.*

[Correspondent] [word indistinct] *Do we know that Hizballah live in villages there,* [words indistinct] *in south Lebanon? They do not have* [word indistinct]?

[Al-Hariri] *They have no right to use the villages, to attack, from the villages, the occupied territories. And they do not have the right to launch any arms and any rockets toward the Israeli territory, at all.* [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Mr. Prime Minister, there was talk about the right to resistance and Israel's right to [words indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] All this is understood, we cannot raise this subject. The countries will determine this. It will have a military character, of course.

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] This will be referred to the committee. It is not a question of Hizballah. Hizballah's name is not mentioned in the agreement. The agreement talks about armed factions. This understanding is meant to ease the escalation, not to introduce measures to escalate the situation. Everything was considered to prevent any kind escalation. This is the foundation on which this understanding was established; namely, nonescalation. This is very important, and I thank you for your question. The foundation on which this understanding was established is that there should be no escalation.

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] *One of the bases of this understanding is to avoid escalation. This is why we do not say how we escalate, we say how to solve the problems if there is any. If anybody violates this understanding, there is a procedure to deal with this violation.*

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] *Thank you for this question. I think this is a very important one, very important one. One of the problems I was always thinking about was the way Israel was attacking the country. It looks like they want to destroy all we have done in the last four years. At least they want to destroy the confidence in the future of the country, and I believe we worked hard to make this understanding as it is now to assure everybody, especially the Lebanese, that military action will not be repeated again. And I am confident that if we are going to implement this understanding, the sort of action we have seen in the last 15 days will not be seen again. [passage omitted]*

[Al-Hariri] Finally, we would like to thank all of the countries that supported us. In particular, we thank the custodian of the two holy mosques, King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz; His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco; President Husni Mubarak; the British prime minister, [who showed support] after our visit to Britain; the brothers in Kuwait; and all the friends in the world who contacted us, supported us, and sent assistance. President Carlos Menem called from Argentina. We thank all friends who contacted us and supported us during the tragedy that our country has experienced. God willing, this will be the end of the sad times.

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] This is a different subject.

[Correspondent] [question indistinct]

[Al-Hariri] Each party did its best.

Lebanon: Nasrallah Announces Hizballah Cease-Fire

LD2604173296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A few moments ago, Sayid Hasan Nasrallah, secretary-general of the revolutionary Hizballah movement announced: A cease-fire understanding [tafahom] has been achieved to end the Zionist regime's attacks against Lebanon.

He referred to the conditions set down by Hizballah and guaranteed in this understanding, saying: This is a very good understanding which is in the interest of the Muslim people of Lebanon because it guarantees to protect the civilian population of Lebanon.

Extensive demonstrations in most parts of the world against the attacks of the Zionist regime and the condemnation of that regime by [international] forums ultimately led to the acceptance of a cease-fire agreement by that regime.

An hour or so ago the radio of the Zionist regime announced that that regime had agreed to the cease-fire understanding. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Hizballah Leader Says Cease-Fire Agreement 'Very Good'

NC2604174596 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1705 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah has stated that the cease-fire agreement is very good. He said efforts attained that on which we insisted, as regards the resistance, its continuation, protecting civilians and all civilian targets, and lifting all forms of the seige imposed on Lebanon.

Nasrallah met in Damascus with Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' this afternoon.

Lebanon: 'Text' of Lebanese-Israeli Cease-Fire 'Understanding'

NC2604180996 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1610 GMT 26 Apr 96

["Text" of the understanding reached by the United States after intensive talks with the governments of Lebanon and Israel in consultation with Syria—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] The understanding: After talks with the governments of Israel and Lebanon and consultations with Syria, the United States reached the conviction that Lebanon and Israel will commit themselves to implementing the following:

1. No armed groups in Lebanon shall attack Israel using katyusha rockets or any other weapons.

2. Israel and those cooperating with it shall not fire any type of weapon at civilians or civilian targets in Lebanon.

3. In addition to this, and no matter what the circumstances, all parties pledge not to target civilians for attacks, and also not to use areas populated by civilians, industrial regions, or electricity establishments as starting points for military attacks.

4. Without violating this understanding, nothing mentioned in it shall prevent any party from exercising self-defense.

A committee of observers from the United States, France, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel was set up to monitor the implementation of what is understood of the above. Complaints will be presented to this committee, and in case of any claim of a violation of this understanding, the plaintiff will present the complaint within 24 hours. The observers committee shall draw up the measures that need to be taken as regards complaints. The United States will also set up a consultative group that includes France, the nations of the European Union, Russia, and other concerned parties to assist Lebanon with what it needs to reconstruct the country.

It has been recognized that the understanding that put an end to the crisis between Lebanon and Israel cannot be considered an alternative to a permanent solution. The United States realizes the importance of reaching a comprehensive peace in the region. To achieve this, the United States suggests that negotiations between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel be resumed at an agreed-upon date with a view to reaching a comprehensive peace. The United States believes that it is appropriate for these negotiations to be held in an atmosphere of stability and calm.

This understanding will be announced simultaneously in all nations concerned.

Lebanon: France's de Charette Explains Cease-Fire Supervision Committee

LD2604181396 Paris France-Inter Radio Network in French 1700 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Warren Christopher's presence by the side of Shim'on Peres [at their news conference today] shows very clearly the weight of America's role in the diplomatic negotiations. But France's role has also been influential, which explains the presence of French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette by the side of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in Beirut. Herve de Charette is interviewed by Frederic Carbonne:

[Begin de Charette recording] This agreement is guaranteed by a committee, a supervision committee, that will include representatives of the five states — Israel, Lebanon, Syria, France, and the United States — and whose function will be to examine all disputes; that is, all violations of the agreement. Why? Because, as you know, it was a French proposal to attempt to ensure that an incident, a violation, would not degenerate into an escalation, into reprisals and responses and reprisals again — everything we have been experiencing in the last few months. The country that has a complaint — Lebanon or Israel in this case — will turn to the committee, and the five member states meeting around the table will try to find out the origin [of the complaint]. This committee, as soon as possible, will have to set its working methods and resources. [end recording]

Lebanon: Ulema Criticize Israel, U.S. in Friday Prayer Sermons

LD2604172596 Tehran IRNA in English 1553 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, April 26, IRNA — The Israeli aggression on Lebanon is in fact an aggression on all Arabs, because the nature of the Zionist entity and its presence in the region is itself a kind of aggression, said the leader of Islamic Tawhid [Unification] Movement Shaykh Sa'id Sha'ban in his Friday prayer sermons at al-Amin mosque in Tripoli, northern Lebanon.

He said the motive behind the forced planting of the illegal regime in Palestine was to weaken Arabs and Muslims, to fragment their ranks and to weaken the Islamic ummah.

Sha'ban said that Israel was in fact the 52nd state of U.S., and therefore the Lebanese people and Arabs should not believe the words of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, because he lied more than Clinton and Peres.

He warned that the U.S and Israel are pursuing their own interests and therefore the Arabs and Muslims should confront the domineering policy of Washington and the Qods [Jerusalem] occupying regime.

Meanwhile, a member to the assembly of Lebanese Muslim ulema, Shaykh Mustafa Malz in his Friday prayers sermons here on Friday [26 April] criticized the inability of Arab states to confront the war-mongering nature of Israel and its mentor the U.S.

He lauded the people's resistance against Zionist regime's brutal attacks and called for more help and support for Lebanon's Islamic resistance.

In related news, head of the Council of Jabal Amal ulema, Shaykh Afif (Nablosi), said the U.S. was the one which waged the war and had no right to propose any plan.

He also blasted PNA's [Palestinian National Authority] Yasir 'Arafat for his recent anullment of the Palestine charter which calls for armed struggle to liberate occupied Palestine.

Lebanon: Israel's Lubrani Views Provisions of New Agreement

NC2604182196 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1650 GMT 26 Apr 96

["Exclusive" interview with Uri Lubrani, Israeli coordinator of Lebanese affairs, by unidentified correspondent; place and date not given—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Do you see any differences between the 1993 July understanding and the current one?

[Lubrani] The difference is important. There is a difference in form, but this is not the most important point. This agreement is written and satisfies all the parties. The 1993 agreement was oral and ambiguous and subject to different and contradictory interpretations.

[Correspondent] Are there important differences regarding their contents, too?

[Lubrani] Without doubt. I would like to refer to some of them:

A. Civilians shall not be attacked in under any circumstances whatsoever. This is one of the important clauses in the new agreement. As the coordinator of activities in Lebanon, I attach much importance to it, especially as it is the third clause which indisputably stipulates that civilians should not be attacked wherever they are and under no circumstances whatsoever. As far as we are concerned, this means all civilians, including the inhabitants of the security area. This was not mentioned in the former agreement.

B. The achievement of the Grapes of Wrath's objective of preventing any shelling of Israel. It is well known that the firing of Katyusha rockets was banned in the 1993 understanding. It is also banned now, because that was the primary objective of Operation Grapes of Wrath. The current understanding not only reimposes a ban on the firing of Katyushas at Israel, but expands this ban to include the firing of all types of weapons. This is in addition to the total ban on attacking civilians and the creation of a mechanism to supervise this. This compliments and strengthens the ban on firing on Israel.

C. The Lebanese Government has become a direct party to the new understanding. That government, which was absent in the 1993 understanding, is now a principal party to the new understanding. This makes the Lebanese directly responsible for and committed to the execution of the agreement and for restraining Hizballah from violating it. What the Lebanese Army does or does not do will be decisive for this issue. Israel's eyes will be ceaselessly observing the extent of the Lebanese Army's success and its ability to fulfill its responsibility.

D. Prevention of military operations from civilian areas. One of the weak points in the 1993 agreement of understanding was it enabled Hizballah to set up an effective and widespread terrorist network within population centers, thus endangering the residents' lives and possessions.

Clause 3 of the current understanding bans the use of population centers as bases for terrorist action. I hope that Hizballah, especially the Lebanese and Syrian governments, are aware of the importance of every letter in this clause.

E. Setting up a mechanism for international supervision. This new understanding differs from the old one in that it establishes an international mechanism in the form of a number of countries that will supervise its implementation — a monitoring group [previous two words in English]. Foremost among these countries is the United States. I have every hope that this supervisory mechanism will help strengthen the solidity of this agreement.

Lebanon: Buwayz Comments on Cease-Fire 'Understanding'

NC2604193996 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[News conference by Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz with unidentified correspondents after a special meeting of the cabinet at Government House in Beirut on 26 April—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the wake of the Israeli acts of aggression, several international initiatives were taken to end the military operations and acts of aggression and bring about a cease-fire. The cease-fire ran into political and security problems. The problems had to do with how to bring about about a final cease-fire and guarantee security and stability — particularly to civilians — in the absence of a political process. These efforts have not yet attained the cherished objective. In light of all these initiatives and endeavors by the heads of state of friendly and fraternal countries — Presidents Clinton, Chirac, Hafiz al-Asad, and several others, as well as foreign ministers, including Secretary of State Christopher and France's de Charette — an understanding was reached on a cease-fire based on certain foundations. The cabinet reviewed these efforts and their results at its special meeting today. The cabinet reviewed this understanding and discussed it in detail.

First, it must be taken into consideration that this understanding does not claim to solve the political problem. The political problem can only be solved through the peace process and in accordance with UN Security Council [Resolution] 425. This resolution alone constitutes a realistic and guaranteed mechanism to work out a radical, final solution to all types of fighting and security problems. Until this resolution is implemented — which could be brought about through a comprehensive peace process — a temporary, phased solution had to be found to end the bloodshed and deterioration without replacing the cherished political solution. This understanding was reached after numerous contacts and efforts.

First, this understanding does not constitute a contract. The parties to the conflict have not signed a contract. It involves an exchange of views and letters on certain clear concepts.

Second, this understanding does not claim to replace a political agreement. It says it seeks to organize and calm the situation for a certain period of time, until a political solution is worked out. This understanding, like any agreement, cannot solve all the different types of problems that may arise. However, new elements were introduced into it: First, it is clear, and on paper.

Second, it includes a mechanism involving a committee for supervising this understanding, including a number of influential countries — the United States, France, and Syria, as well as the parties to the conflict — Lebanon and Israel.

Third, this understanding takes into consideration the material destruction and the damage to the Lebanese infrastructure. The understanding set up a consultative committee that will seek to support Lebanon economically to address the damage resulting from the fighting.

We believe the understanding can limit the fighting while establishing Lebanon's right to continue resisting the occupation. This is a basic element in this understanding. But the battles will not extend beyond the border of the occupied Lebanese territory—that is, civilians on neither side will be targeted. Thus, we believe the understanding will help the situation on the ground see a relative calm and that certain limits will not be exceeded pending the reaching of a radical political solution, which, of course, depends on many other political considerations.

[Correspondent] [Question indistinct]

[Buwayz] I have already said that the agreement stresses Lebanon's right to resistance, but at the same time it prevents the resistance from firing rockets across the border. That is, it confines the field of military operations to the occupied Lebanese region.

[Correspondent] [Question indistinct]

[Buwayz] The understanding states that there will be a cease-fire in the fullest sense of the word. This means the immediate return of all displaced people to their villages and homes. We believe that as soon as the cease-fire goes into effect—that is, 0400 [0100 GMT] Saturday [27 April]—all citizens should return to reassert their right to their land and their national rights.

At any rate, the Council of Ministers also touched on ways to support this return at all levels and by all concerned ministries. I believe that the competent ministries, including the Works Ministry, will immediately start assessing the situation on the scene in order to start repairs. The Health Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and all other ministries will do their best to facilitate the return of the displaced.

[Correspondent] [Question indistinct]

[Buwayz] First—and I think we said this several times—resistance is a national right of the entire Lebanese people represented by their state. This right is not exclusive to a certain group. The exercising of this right, therefore, is in the hands of the Lebanese state alone, which is the sole one to have this right. But as regards the form — how things were mentioned — it is clear to the committee that will supervise this understanding, which includes the concerned states — Lebanon and Israel — and other influential countries — the United States, Syria, France, and others — that Hizballah or the resistance or all the resistance factions were informed of the contents of this understanding. The Lebanese state, together with the states that are supervising this understanding, consider themselves responsible for this.

[Correspondent] [Question indistinct]

[Buwayz] Of course. This agreement confines all sorts of operations inside the occupied Lebanese territories—that is, it is within the resistance's right to practice resistance against the Israeli occupier in the occupied territories. Any action outside this framework will immediately be presented to the supervisory committee, the mechanism for which will be set within the next few days and which will then take the appropriate stance on condemning one party or another.

[Correspondent] [Question indistinct]

[Buwayz] Of course. It is expected that as of 0400 local time all military operations outside the occupied Lebanese territories will stop. Any military action that violates this understanding or goes outside the boundaries of the occupied Lebanese territories can be presented to this international committee and the necessary arrangements can then be made regarding it.

[Correspondent] [Question indistinct]

[Buwayz] The importance of this committee lies in the fact that when the agreement is violated, instead of having an impulsive and emotional reaction, the party that considers itself targeted by this operation gives the committee a grace period of 24 hours after it hands in the protest so that the committee can determine who is responsible and try to take the necessary steps.

[Correspondent] How can the committee ascertain that the Lebanese Government [word indistinct] Hizballah?

[Buwayz] Consultations have taken place between the Lebanese Government and Hizballah, between the Syrian Government and Hizballah, and among other parties. As a result of these talks, one can ascertain that Hizballah agrees to this understanding. In all cases, if we look at this understanding carefully we see that it does not contradict the essence of the proposals of the Lebanese resistance, which insists on its right to resist the occupation and did not mind being committed to not firing missiles across the borders as long as Israel is committed to not attacking Lebanese citizens. Therefore, this commitment by the Lebanese resistance under the supervision of the Lebanese state is dependent on the Israeli pledge not to attack civilians or areas outside the scope of the occupation.

Lebanon: Al-Hirawi Comments on Cease-Fire Understanding

NC2604213696 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 2005 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Statement by Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi on 26 April in Boston—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] I have been following this agreement, which was submitted by two countries—first by France and then the United States. We had our comments to add to the two proposals. I believe that those who were entrusted with this matter — we in Lebanon depended on them as officials — reached the result we all want. We want a cease-fire; we want the displaced people to return to their homes and villages; we want the shelling of civilians to stop; and we want to continue the road to peace. A committee has been formed. Thank God, now that we have a committee we can complain to it over some of the [words indistinct].

I believe that this is not the agreement which will put an end to the state of war between Lebanon and Israel. This is a temporary agreement on a cease-fire so that we do not pay the price with our victims hour after hour. However, when negotiations start at the level of regional peace, particularly in Lebanon, we shall not budge an inch from Resolution 425.

There is no war between us and Israel. On the contrary, Israel is the one that has invaded us. It invaded us the first time in 1978. After that, Resolution 425 was issued. It invaded us again because its ambassador in London was attacked—I do not know by whom he was attacked. They invaded even the capital Beirut. And everyone knows these facts.

We refuse to be the land that [word indistinct] for the war of others on our land.

Lebanon: France's de Charette Interviewed on Cease-Fire Agreement

LD2604224096 Paris France-2 Television Network in French 1800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] [Announcer Daniel Bilalian] I return for a moment to the cease-fire that is to come into force tonight in southern Lebanon between Israel and the pro-Iranian Hizballah militias. We now have on the line from Beirut French Foreign Minister Mr. Herve de Charette. Minister, good evening.

[De Charette] Good evening.

[Bilalian] Minister, this arrangement that has been concluded today is of course sponsored by great powers like France and the United States, but it nonetheless depends a lot on the goodwill of the two parties present. In your opinion, are we not returning to a situation that was the situation prevailing before?

[De Charette] No, because the previous situation was a confused situation that indeed depended on an arrangement, that had neither been written down nor been passed with the Lebanese Government or the Israeli Government. So darkness reigned, and of course it ended up, as it had to, badly.

I think today we have something better. First, we have a written text. That is a very important point, and it was one of the recommendations we made from then outset. Second, it is a precise text that says exactly what is forbidden from now on, and that gives the civilian population in northern Israel and southern Lebanon the chance henceforth of living in safety. That was an absolutely essential point — it was in fact the central issue. Finally, it is an agreement that creates a supervision group, including of course Israel and Lebanon, but also Syria, France, and the United States, and this group will be responsible for ensuring the proper working and the proper application of this accord — that is, as soon as ....

[Bilalian, interrupting] Now, minister — yes, please finish.

[De Charette] No, I simply wanted to say that — very practical things. That is, as soon as there is any violation of the agreement by one of the parties, it will be referred to this group, which will make the appropriate inquiry very quickly and then take the necessary measures for that not to happen. So it is a question of replacing the logic of a chain reaction of violence with the opposite logic ....

[Bilalian, interrupting] With a logic of peace.

[De Charette, continuing] ...namely, that's right, the logic of peace.

[Bilalian] Now, minister, you have been on the scene now for about a week, toing and froing ....

[De Charette, interrupting] No, it is 13 days now.

[Bilalian] This event marks France's return to the diplomatic scene in the Middle East.

[De Charette] That's true.

[Bilalian] For quite a while that seemed to annoy the Americans and indeed to get on the Israelis' nerves.

[De Charette] Yes. The first effect of it was to create a lot of scepticism in the French media, Mr. Bilalian, indeed quite a bit of irony. And it is true it caused a certain irritation, notably on the part of the Americans. I cannot deny it: one has to say things as they are. But

I think today all that is behind us, and from now on the French and the Americans, who will work together for the application of this agreement, in which, as you know, there are a lot of French ideas ....[pauses] Well, it is a very useful guarantee for the future. France is indeed back in the Middle East, but of course it does not intend to be the only one. So everyone must work together, including the French and the Americans.

[Bilalian] Thank you, Minister.

Lebanon: Hizballah Deputy Says 'Resistance' Will Not Abate

NC2604182796 London MBC Television in Arabic 1800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] While the Hizballah Secretary General was announcing in Damascus that he is committed to the cease-fire, a Hizballah representative at the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies [Muhammad Barjawi] stressed that the agreement will not reduce resistance operations against the Israelis in the occupied territories:

[Begin Muhammad Barjawi recording] Naturally, the resistance pattern will remain unchanged, and we will remain at the highest level of preparedness to inflict damage on the occupation soldiers in the occupied territories. We cannot rest or turn a blind eye when our territory is occupied, our people are being humiliated, and a large number of detainees remain in the prisons of the occupation. [end recording]

Lebanon: Hizballah's Nasrallah Calls Israeli Assault 'Failure'

NC2704021396 Paris AFP in English 2343 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, April 27 (AFP) — The leader of the pro-Iranian Hizballah militia said here overnight that Israel's two-week military operation in southern Lebanon had been a military and political "failure" for Israel.

Israel wanted to "destroy our infrastructure, disarm Hizballah and stop the Katyusha rockets", said Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah, Hizballah's secretary-general at a press conference in the Shiite southern suburbs of Beirut.

"Despite all its technology, Israel was not able to hit a single Katyusha launch base. I challenge (Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on) Peres to produce a photograph of even one base hit by artillery. This proves the military failure of Operation Grapes of Wrath," he said.

Shaykh Nasrallah acknowledged that his movement had lost "13 martyrs in 16 days of military operations, killed while travelling, or by haphazard bombardments or while fighting in the front lines".

He said the operation had been "an immediate outcome" of the international conference against terrorism organised on March 13 at Sharm al-Shaykh in Egypt. The aim was "separate Lebanon from Syria in order to isolate Syria".

"The most important thing is to have brought about the failure of the political aim of this operation, which was to isolate Lebanon and bring Syria into line," he said.

He said "the support of the Lebanese Government and that of Syria, notably of President Hafiz al-Asad" made a decisive contribution to "the failure of the Israeli operation".

Shaykh Nasrallah also "thanked" Iran and paid tribute to "the position adopted by Europe and particularly by France".

Lebanon: Fadlallah Praises Hizballah's 'Valor' in Prayer Sermons

LD2604184196 Tehran IRNA in English 1752 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, April 26, IRNA — The U.S. is Lebanon [as received] for the crimes of the Zionist regime in Lebanon, said prominent alim, al-'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, in his Friday prayer sermons at the Imam Reza mosque here.

He said the 16-day Zionist terrorism unmasked the true nature of the Qods [Jerusalem]-occupying regime and awakened the Arab and Muslim masses to the dangers of the so-called Middle East peace process, as was indicated by their support for the Lebanese defenders.

"In the history of Arab-Israel wars, no Arab army could stand more than six days against the Zionist regime, but (today) the people of Lebanon by their steadfastness proved that the Zionist war machine was incapable of crushing the resolve of determined nations," said Fadlallah amid shouts of God's majesty by the worshippers.

He praised the valour and spirit of the Hizballah defenders, and said that if the Islamic resistance had not fired Katyusha rockets on northern Palestine, the Zionist regime would have annexed southern Lebanon to occupied Palestine.

In his sermons, the al-'Allameh referred to recent anullment of the Palestine charter which called for an armed struggle to liberate Palestine, and said that PNA's Yasir 'Arafat exploited the Lebanese crisis to out this sinister act against the national interests of the Palestinian people.

Lebanon: Police Say Cease-Fire by Both Sides Holding

NC2704021496 Paris AFP in English
0143 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Beirut, April 27 (AFP) — A ceasefire went into force at 04:00 a.m. (01:00 GMT) Saturday [27 April] in southern Lebanon putting an end to a 16-day Israeli military operation against Iranian-backed Hizballah guerrillas, which claimed the lives of 164 Lebanese, nearly all civilians. Lebanese police said both sides appeared to be respecting the truce.

The ceasefire accord obliges both sides to abstain from further attacks on civilians on either side of the border but allows Hizballah to pursue its "resistance" against the Israeli presence in the "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

The ceasefire was announced simultaneously Friday in Jerusalem and in Beirut after a marathon mediation effort by the United States assisted by France. It will be monitored by an international committee drawn from the United States, France, Syria, Lebanon and Israel.

The Israeli bombardments intensified as the announcement was made by Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Jerusalem and by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette in Beirut. Christopher said the "written understandings" obliged both Israel and the Iranian-backed Hizballah guerrillas to refrain from attacking civilian areas on either side of the border.

"The carrying out of these understandings will end the Katyusha attacks and protect civilians in both Israel and Lebanon," he said, referring to the rockets fired daily into Israel by Hizballah since the Jewish State launched its Operation Grapes of Wrath.

Israel did not obtain a hoped-for promise of an end to Hizballah attacks on its troops deployed in the so-called south Lebanon "security zone". But Christopher said Hizballah guerrillas attacking the buffer zone could no longer use "civilian populated areas or infrastructure areas such as industrial zones" as launchpads for their operations.

And Peres said Israel retained the right to fight back against attacks on the zone. "The right of self-defense is not limited," he said. "If our troops are attacked, they will return fire." Hizballah chief Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah described the deal as "very good," saying it had preserved the guerrillas' "right to resistance".

Al-Hariri said Lebanon and Israel had to ensure that there were no attacks on civilians or infrastructure. "We will do our best to make sure that this will be respected," he said. But he added: "Hizballah have the right to fight in the Lebanese occupied territory. We want to see our land liberated." [passage omitted]

As the accord was announced, Israeli aircraft carried out 11 bombing raids near al-Nabatiyah, according to Lebanese police and Israeli fighter-bombers also dropped nine bombs in six raids on villages south of Tyre. The last Israeli raid was at 08:30 p.m. (1730 GMT) on the district surrounding al-Nabatiyah.

At the same time, the Israeli navy kept up an artillery barrage on the coast road leading to southern Lebanon, firing around 100 shells, police said. Sporadic firing continued late into Friday night in southern Lebanon and a long-range Grad missile was fired at northern Israel just after midnight local time (2100 GMT), Lebanese police said. Shortly before, Israeli ships shelled the coast road at the northern entrance to Sidon but no one was injured, the police said.

Other shells were fired at intervals from the Israeli-occupied "security zone" at villages outside the zone, according to the Lebanese police who said "on this front, the situation is back to what it was before" the Israeli operation began on April 11. Police said 16 Katyusha rockets were fired at northern Israel.

Lebanon: 'Complete Calm' Prevails in Southern Areas

NC2704031196 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic
0302 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Complete calm has been prevailing in the southern areas since the cease-fire agreement took effect at 0400 [0100 GMT]. This was preceded by air raids conducted by Israeli warplanes on a number of villages. Furthermore, vast areas of the central and western sectors were bombarded.

Lebanon: Civilian Cars Seen Heading South After Cease-Fire Begins

NC2704032896 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic
0303 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Convoys of cars have been seen on the coastal line heading south since early today. The security forces have warned the citizens not to approach strange bodies or enter areas that were the targets of the aggression, as there might be delayed-action bombs.

The Army command said that it will place military transport at the disposal of the returnees as of 0900 [0600 GMT] every day at assembly points in Beirut, al-Awza'i, al-Biqa', and al-Shuf.

Lebanon: Roads to South 'Thick' With Traffic

NC2704084896 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Traffic is thick on the roads between Beirut and the south as displaced citizens return to their home villages. The Railway and Road Transport Authority has announced that it has placed buses at the disposal of citizens returning to the south. It named several assembly points where they can board the buses in Beirut, namely the area between al-Barbir and the Shatila roundabout and the area between al-Barbir and the race course.

Meanwhile, the Army Command's Guidance Directorate has announced that special Army units have begun inspecting the areas and roads which were targets of bombardment in order to clear them of unexploded shells. The Army Command urged the citizens to be alert while travelling in those areas, especially during the first few days after their return, and not to touch any suspicious objects. It asked them to report such objects to the nearest military center for the sake of public safety.

Lebanon: Hizballah Chief—14 Members Dead; Israeli Operation Failed

NC2704112996 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1030 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah has declared that Israel's Grapes of Wrath operation has failed both militarily and politically. He said Israel sought to disarm the Resistance, ruin its infrastructure, and prevent the firing of Katyusha rockets.

Nasrallah announced that 14 Hizballah Resistance fighters were martyred during the Israeli aggression.

Lebanon: Arab League Secretary Arrives, Meets al-Hariri, Buwayz

NC2704115196 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1115 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid, who arrived in Beirut at noon today, met at 1300 with the prime minister.

Afterward Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said: The Lebanese people have demonstrated their unity and heroism, which the whole world community admires.

He added: In line with joint Arab action we believe the Arab League and Arab states have a responsibility to stand by Lebanon. We welcome the [cease-fire] agreement, providing Israel implements Resolution 425.

At 1345 'Abd-al-Majid met Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz in the Ministry headquarters. French Ambassador Jean-Pierre la Fonda attended part of the meeting.

'Abd-al-Majid said on arrival in Lebanon that there is determination to implement the cease-fire.

Lebanon: Israeli Officers, SLA's Lahd Meet, Comment on Cease-Fire

NC2704143196 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1330 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] South Lebanese Army [SLA] Commander Major General Antoine Lahd today received Uri Lubrani, coordinator of the Israeli Affairs in Lebanon; Major General 'Amiram Levin, commander of the northern zone; and Major General Giyora 'Inbar, commander of the Lebanon Liaison Unit. During the meeting, they discussed the results of Operation Grapes of Wrath and the understanding that has been reached.

After the meeting Maj. Gen. Lahd told reporters that the understanding that has been reached was the most that could be attained in view of the international and regional circumstances. He said that what counts is to implement the articles of this understanding and that it must not be merely ink on paper. He noted that the most important clause outlined in this understanding concerns the neutrality of the civilians. He said that the Lebanese Government must consider the population of the border area as Lebanese and must not shirk its responsibility if anything happens to civilians in this area. The Lebanese Government must not say in such cases that it can do nothing, he said. He added that if, God forbid, anything happens, the Lebanese Government will bear full responsibility. If it fails, we will declare publicly that it is not up to the responsibility.

On the measures that he will take should an incident take place, Maj. Gen. Lahd said: We will see about what we will do when the time comes. He thanked all the countries that contributed to reaching this understanding, particularly France, which worked hard to preserve the Lebanese Government's dignity. He said: Our primary concern is to see the Lebanese Government rise up and restore its dignity and political decisionmaking. He noted that he concluded from the international intercession that there is encouragement and support for the Lebanese Government's becoming the master of its own fate. He said that he does not know what will happen in the future.

Uri Lubrani said he believes that if nothing violates the terms of the understanding that has been reached, it may serve as a fulcrum for a peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel. He reasserted that Israel has no ambitions in Lebanon. He noted that what counts in the understanding is that the border area has entered the equation within the framework of this understanding. He pointed out that every party concerned with this understanding—the United States, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon—has a work to do, noting that the basic aim of what has happened and the understanding reached is to limit Hizballah operations against the border area. Whether this will be achieved depends on each of these parties. For the first time, there is a role for the Lebanese Government and it must play it, he said.

Regarding Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah's statement that the principle that Beirut's security is linked to Qiryat Shemona's security ended on 16 April [date as heard], Lubrani said that Shaykh Nasrallah has to say something in the current difficult situation. What he says is mere talk, because it is he who caused all the disasters that have befallen the population of south Lebanon. Of course, Nasrallah cannot admit this, Lubrani stressed.

Regarding Nasrallah's remark that Hizballah considers the current understanding similar to the July understanding, Lubrani said: What can we expect Hizballah to say? Would he say that this understanding is worse than the July understanding? If he could say more, he would have said that this understanding is much better. What has happened is an utter failure for Hizballah, he said. He said: This organization must know that there are parties that will not allow it to continue its previous actions and I hope that the Lebanese government will play this role.

In a statement to our correspondent, Maj. Gen. Levin said that it is premature to comment on the results of Operation Grapes of Wrath. He said that the objective was to protect civilians and eliminate the danger to them, particularly the civilians in the border area.

In response to Nasrallah's statement that Hizballah only lost 13 dead during the latest operations and his challenge to the Israelis to prove that they hit one rocket launching pad, Maj. Gen. Levin said that Nasrallah is a liar. He said that he was lying throughout the operations and that Hizballah suffered dozens of dead and wounded, including those who fired Katyusha rockets. He said: We have photographs and we will show them to him, because he is concealing the facts about the casualties and is hiding facts from the families of his supporters regarding the number of dead and wounded.

Asked if Israeli jet fighters will continue to fly through Lebanese airspace, Levin said: We will do what we must on the military level and in the best possible way.

Lebanon: New Understanding Reportedly Ends Israeli Naval Blockade

NC2704194396 Cairo MENA in English
1843 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Damascus, 27 Apr (MENA)—Syrian-Lebanese efforts have succeeded in ending the 10-mouth Israeli naval blockade which prevented Lebanese fishermen from fishing in Lebanon's territorial water, Syrian and Lebanese sources said today. The sources, close to talks held in Damascus over the past ten days, said this issue was in the core of Syrian-Lebanese argument in talks with officials of the U.S. and other parties concerned.

Syrian and Lebanese officials have considered allowing Lebanese fishermen to catch fish in Lebanon's territorial water part and parcel of the understanding reached yesterday, said the sources.

Lebanon: Radio Notes Clinton's Message to al-Hirawi

NC2704194596 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic
1800 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Ilyas al-Hirawi this evening received a message from U.S. President Bill Clinton. The text is as follows:

I was pleased to hear from Secretary of State Warren Christopher that he had succeeded in reaching with you and the Israeli and Syrian leaders a new understanding that prevents attacks on civilians on both sides of the borders of Lebanon and Israel. Ending the suffering of these people was our goal during this ordeal. The negotiations to reach this understanding were difficult. However, I believe that we have taken an important step forward to consolidate the security and stability in the region. It is very important to preserve security and stability.

This achievement will enable your citizens and Israel's to return to their homes and live in peace better than before. This achievement will facilitate reaching a more comprehensive agreement that will lead to economic reconstruction in south Lebanon. In this connection, it pleases me to tell you that we have set up a consultative group to study these matters.

The written understanding reached by Secretary of State Christopher after discussions with Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri is an important step forward. However, it is important that this understanding be fully implemented. Lebanon and Syria have an important role in securing this understanding and in doing all that can be done to prevent Hizballah from launching aggression against Israel with rockets.

We have worked hard with Prime Minister al-Hariri and Speaker Birri to reach this agreement. I rely on you to work with us to create an atmosphere of stability and calm so as to facilitate progress in the negotiations and increase the opportunities to reach our common goal. I stress my commitment to do all I can to help this happen and to enable Lebanon to restore its full sovereignty and independence and be free of foreign forces on its territory.

I was pleased to have met you and I look forward to our continued common work. I wish you a quick recovery.

[Signed] Bill Clinton.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri on Cease-Fire, Relations With France

LD2704223396 Paris Radio France International in French 2110 GMT 27 Apr 96

[Interview with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri by Marc Le Beaupin in Lebanon on 27 April — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Hariri] It will hold because there is no reason for it not lasting. We have done everything possible to achieve important guarantees for the cease-fire; and I find it will be very difficult [word indistinct] one of the parties did not respect it.

[Le Beaupin] I nonetheless sense in the Lebanese population, a population which has learned from history, a certain (?weariness) even so: The refugees have returned to their villages very quickly, but at the same time the future is still uncertain for them.

[Al-Hariri] Yes, I think we have not got peace. This arrangement will be capable more or less of ensuring safety and stability in the region — the southern region; but we await the discussions on peace, the peace process [words indistinct] they can begin soon, quite soon.

[Le Beaupin] Let us return, if we may, to the terms of the agreement. It is a relatively short accord — practically a single sheet. It is a written accord, which makes it different from the oral agreement of 1993. Do you consider that it is nevertheless an important step forward from what was done in 1993?

[Al-Hariri] It is different. Firstly, it is written. Secondly, there are mechanisms for respecting the accord. There is also the commitment of the countries which are represented by this arrangement [as heard]. There is an important article concerning the peace process, which gives the impression [as heard] that everybody — the United States, France, Lebanon, Israel, and Syria — are in agreement and have an important willingness to continue the peace process.

[Le Beaupin] Can you explain to us why — undoubtedly the diplomacy is relatively complex, but why could one not yet conceive of a signed accord?

[Al-Hariri] You know, for us, we are seeking a global and comprehensive and just accord in order to resolve the problems in the Middle East once and for all. We have made this arrangement in order to ensure that....[pauses] It is a temporary arrangement; everybody must do everything in order to achieve real peace.

[Le Beaupin] What, for you, has been the importance of the French approach in this conflict and in this crisis?

[Al-Hariri] Very important: That is, France has given the (?very firm) impression that it is with Lebanon, it is against violence, it is for peace and it does not accept the continuation of the violence which we have seen; and certainly we have insisted that France still remain on the committee [words indistinct].

[Le Beaupin] For a while people spoke a bit about competition between France and the United States in this process.

[Al-Hariri] No, there is no competition. There is complementarity. Each one can help the other in order to reach the reasonable situation, and France can also assist in this peace process.

Lebanon: Nasrallah to Iranian Paper—Operations May Not Cease

LD2804221896 Tehran IRNA in English 2145 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 28, IRNA — In an interview printed in the English-language daily 'KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL' on Sunday [28 April], secretary-general of the Lebanese Hizballah Hojjat ol-Eslam Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah said that "with respect to the ceasefire what concerns us is an end to firing Katyushas on the north of Palestine, but it doesn't mean that we will stop our operations (against zionist occupiers)."

He said that "resistance will continue as long as Zionist occupiers are present in South Lebanon. Resistance is our right and as far as our rights are concerned we will act accordingly."

The interview was conducted in Damascus two days before the ceasefire accord to end Israel's 16-day state terrorism in Lebanon.

The Hizballah, undauntedly stood up to Israel's aggression, targetting the enemy's military and industrial sites in northern Palestine with a steady barrage of Katyusha rockets.

Israel, obviously unnerved by the Islamic resistance, took out its frustration on the defenceless people, by killing villagers and devastating the infrastructure of south Lebanon.

Asked why do all eyes turn to Iran whenever Hizballah carries out a brave attack, Nasrallah said: "In all my press interviews, especially with Western reporters and representatives of the international media, I have underlined that the resistance in Lebanon is independent and arises from our will and determination. Our operations against occupiers is a duty which we shoulder."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the Lebanese people's right to defend and resist against Israel as the U.S. backs Israel in its aggression against the region and nations. The Islamic Republic, of course, supports the Lebanese people's resistance on the basis of its Islamic and humanitarian stance."

He said that the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i's message to the Lebanese people following the cowardly Zionist aggression on defenceless people, was inspiring.

"I explicity say that we do not fear Western allegations nor does Ayatollah Khamene'i. He did not send his message secretly but he gave it to the wire services," added Nasrallah.

The Hizballah leader, whose force has come to be viewed as a model resistant movement, said the Zionists badly miscalculated in their recent aggression on Lebanese soil and made mistakes in their assessments because they depend on informants and paid agents, but "we can claim that our resistance is free from such penetrations and the Zionists have not been able to permeate our movement.

"Moreover, they also made a mistake in dealing with Islamic liberation fighters. The Zionists think that threats, aerial bombardments and shellings and intimidation will stop the fighters from continuing their path. All these efforts are futile. The Zionists are well aware that they are fighting a group which believes in God and seeks martyrdom, has no attachment to the world and is ready for death.

"They are followers of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) who loved death as a (suckling) baby loves its mother's breast."

The term Hizballah, which means 'Party of God', is derived from the verses of the Holy Qur'an (5:56 and 58:22), where the almighty promises eventual victory to the righteous against the forces of evil.

Lebanon: 1 Million Syrian Workers Return Home; Economy Said Suffering

NC2604102296 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 0930 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut press reports say the Grapes of Wrath operation has harmed the Syrian economy. Over 1 million Syrian workers have left Lebanon. Several Lebanese companies have dismissed irregular workers, most of them Syrians.

Lebanon: Israeli Bombardment of Tyre Villages Said To Intensify

NC2604103296 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1008 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY correspondent reports that the Israeli air and artillery bombardment has intensified. Israeli heavy artillery is carrying out a violent and concerted bombardment of the villages of al-Qulaylah, al-Mansuri, al-Hinniyah, Majdal Zun, Ra's al-'Ayn, and 'Ayn B'al. Israeli warplanes are raiding the al-Tabbarah road between Qallawiyah and Khirbat Silm and the Wadi Jilu-'Aytit road. Israeli artillery is also bombarding Dayr Kifa and its surroundings. Israeli warplanes are overflying the central sector, raiding secondary roads.

In response to the Israeli attacks the [Islamic] Resistance fired another salvo of katyusha rockets at Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine.

Lebanon: Israeli Warships Leave Lebanese Territorial Waters

NC2604110896 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1057 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in from the newsdesk: The Israeli warships that were deployed near the al-Rumaylah-al-Awwali coast left the Lebanese territorial waters a few minutes ago.

Lebanon: Air Force Hits 'Terrorist' Targets in South

TA2604131596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Air Force attacked terrorist targets in al-Siddiqin and in Ma'rub at noon. The pilots reported good hits at the targets. All our planes returned safely to base.

Lebanon: Israeli Warships Still Anchored off Coast

NC2604113496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1124 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in from the newsdesk: Sources in Sidon have confirmed that the Israeli warships are still anchored off the al-Rumaylah-al-Awwali coast. They fired four shells on the coastal road a short time ago while Israeli warplanes flew overhead.

Israeli warplanes have also raided the main road of Ma'rub. Thus Ma'rub and Barish are isolated from the neighboring villages.

Lebanon: 'Resistance' Fires 3 Katyusha Volleys at Israeli Settlements

NC2604145496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1445 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Just in: We have now received a report that at 1730 [1430 GMT] the resistance fired three volleys of Katyusha rockets at the upper Galilee settlements. Before the rockets were fired, the Israeli enemy bombarded Shaqra, killing an elderly man.

Lebanon: Radio Warns Southerners To Comply With Communiques

NC2604175196 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1733 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Communique No. 3 "for today"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli security sources have reported that the cease-fire will take effect at 0400 [0100 GMT] tomorrow, Saturday [27 April]. The inhabitants of south Lebanon should behave wisely and carefully and comply with the communiques issued by the Israeli army during the operation. Anyone who behaves differently will endanger his life. He who forewarns is excused.

Lebanon: Paper Highlights 'Realistic' Side of Clinton Remarks

MM2604135896 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 26 Apr 96 p 17

[Article by Khayrallah Khayrallah: "Clinton the Charmer...and Clinton the Realist"]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Clinton's remark that "if Lebanon were completely free and independent, none of this would have happened" will appeal to many, because such talk is what the Lebanese, with their various groups, factions, sects, and regions, like to hear. Ultimately, however, despite coming from the President of the world's only superpower, this is only emotional talk that bears no relation to reality. President Clinton's other remarks that Lebanon will regain its sovereignty and be free of foreign forces when the peace process has been completed, are more realistic.

Such talk is not popular in Lebanon, and naturally, does not appeal to the Lebanese, since it brings them back to reality, to the regional complications, and to the fact that their country is an "arena" for other people's wars.

The Lebanese can only wait and hope that the current war will be their last, through the attainment of a lasting agreement which would prevent south Lebanon from being an arena for regional conflicts, because any major conflagration within this arena would spill over to Beirut, as was recently the case and as is expected should there be a delay in the cease-fire.

The worst that could happen is for the world to forget the slaughter that Israel committed in Qana and the minor slaughters in the other Lebanese regions, and think that it can live with some tension in Lebanon as long as this serves the interests of some quarters. Certainly, Shim'on Peres' government would be the first to benefit from this situation between now and election day on 29 May, as it would show that Peres is facing an external threat and that he is as hard as Yitzhaq Rabin. Moreover, Peres would satisfy the military who want to continue the escalation until the two-week-old operation achieves its objectives, namely to put an end to military operations in the occupied sector and ensure that no more "katyushas" are fired on Galilee. Also, Hizballah will be pleased if the escalation continues, since it has emerged as the only force confronting Israel, while in fact it is playing its game.

What is more important, though, is the fact that the peace process continues in the region. The fact that one track has been interrupted does not mean that the process has come to a standstill, as shown by the Palestine National Council's absolute majority vote to amend the National Charter, making it more compatible with the agreements ratified by Israel and the PLO.

The Lebanese will suffer in this arduous phase. However, at the same time, they must not be captivated by remarks like President Clinton's about sovereignty, freedom, and independence, if they really want to find a solution. Their real hope for a better future rests on maintaining their cohesion now that they are aware that Israel has special designs on them and that President Clinton's real message to them is that Lebanon can only be saved if the peace process is completed. This is a bitter reality which must be accepted, and attempts must be made to escape from it with minimum losses. There is Clinton the charmer...and Clinton the realist. The closer the Lebanese get to reality, the more hope they will have of being saved and taking matters as they really are and not as they dream of them.

Lebanon: Security Situation Begins To Improve, People Returning

NC2604214396 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 2100 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Ever since the announcement on the cease-fire was made at 1800 [1500 GMT] this evening simultaneously in Beirut and Tel Aviv, the security situation has started to improve gradually. The intensity of the Israeli attacks has started to abate but has not stopped completely. Extreme caution still prevails in the areas that came under the oppressive invasion, particularly in the western and central sectors. A series of air raids and intermittent artillery shelling were recorded after the cease-fire announcement in the central and western sectors. [passage omitted]

In another development, after the announcement on the cease-fire agreement was made, a large number of families, particularly from the villages of Yuhmur and Suhmur, have started returning to their homes to inspect them. Normal activity has been reported in these villages. The number of returnees in Suhmur and Yuhmur has been estimated at over 40 percent.

Lebanon: Diplomatic Sources See Lebanese, Syrian Gains in Agreement

NC2604145596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1330 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut, 26 Apr (MENA)—Diplomatic information here confirmed that in the agreement of understanding now being negotiated the United States and Israel have accepted the presence in Lebanon of what is called the armed resistance groups, instead of naming Hizballah.

Diplomatic circles said that recognition of the Lebanese right to resistance, the acceptance of the resistance as a real and effective party, and the change in its name came after lengthy discussions by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher with the concerned parties in Syria, Lebanon, and Israel during the past three days. The sources added that Israel's failure to get the resistance lumped together in the terrorist category represents an important political development, especially for Syria, which needs the U.S. to acknowledge of the right to resistance. The sources added that this acceptance of the presence of armed resistance groups, which might follow different political or religious movements, disproves Israel's claim that it is hitting civilians inside Lebanese territories in order to liberate them.

The diplomatic sources expressed their belief that the Lebanese Government sees in this new formula a legal recognition that there is a "national resistance" that is not solely linked to Hizballah. It also believes that this recognition relieves it of the burdens and responsibilities for controlling the armed resistance groups, which it has had to shoulder internationally. The sources noted that recognition of these groups gives the Lebanese Government a document showing an agreement of intentions between these resistance groups, Israel, and the United States.

Diplomatic sources in Beirut unanimously agreed that the Lebanese resistance's future dominated most of the U.S. talks with the various parties over Israel's conditions and the Syrian-Lebanese rejection of the attempts to impose restrictions on the resistance activities. Under the July 1993 understanding, the resistance enjoyed much freedom of action to retaliate for any Israeli attacks on Lebanese civilians outside the occupied strip. The sources added that Damascus and Beirut vehemently rejected the Israeli and U.S. demands to restrain and disarm the resistance while giving the Israeli army the right to chase the resistance elements anywhere in Lebanese territory. The same sources said that Syrian officials were convinced that Israel's aim was to disarm the resistance so it would not be a card in the peace negotiations with Syria and Lebanon.

Meanwhile, a Hizballah official stressed that no one can take away the Lebanese people's right to resistance, through an understanding or otherwise. Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, member of the Hizballah group in Lebanon's parliament, said in press statements today that the party proposed a return to the July 1993 agreement with guarantees that prevent Israel from attacking civilians, adding that the 1973 agreement included such guarantees. He stressed that Hizballah's Islamic Resistance started to fire rockets at Israeli settlements only after Israel broke this agreement.

Shaykh Muhammad Yazbik, member of Hizballah's shura council, made a similar statement today, saying that the resistance will continue. He added: We refuse, from a position of strength and not from a position of weakness, to let there be security in northern Israel if security is denied to south Lebanon and western al-Biqa'.

Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the highest shiite authority in Lebanon, stressed that the Islamic Resistance supports linking the solution with Israel to the Lebanese state and refuses to sign next to Israel's signature. He called for continuing the dialogue between the state and Hizballah.

Fadlallah, who is regarded as Hizballah's spiritual leader, said that Hizballah's Islamic Resistance does not want to be a security or political alternative to the Lebanese Government despite the resistance's political line with regard to the state, which says that the state is not fighting the resistance but does not want to embrace it.

In statements publicized today by AL-NAHAR, Fadlallah added that the Islamic Resistance cannot end the Israeli occupation but it can make it a problem for the Israelis, adding that the resistance extracts a heavy price.

Lebanon: Israeli Offensive To Cost Lebanon $500 Million

NC2804181096 Paris AFP in English 1725 GMT 28 Apr 96

[Report by Nagib Kazzaka]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, April 28 (AFP) — Israel's 16-day war against Hizballah guerrillas in Lebanon cost the country half a billion dollars and is likely to knock national growth back by two points, Lebanese economists said Sunday [28 April].

Riyad Salamah, the governor of the central bank, told AFP: "Lebanon, which was counting on a growth rate of six percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1996, is likely to lose two points because of the Israeli operation."

The GDP was estimated at 11.5 billion dollars in 1995.

Marwan Iskandar, head of an economic studies unit, said: "Damage to houses, roads and electricity infrastructure, the slowing down of the economy, the displacement of more than 300,000 inhabitants and the delay to public and private projects will cost some 500 million dollars.

"The bill from the destruction of homes, bridges, roads, water pumping stations and the electricity network in south Lebanon alone is estimated at 100 million dollars."

Israeli aircraft also damaged two power stations near Beirut during its Operation Grapes of Wrath which will cost 40 million dollars to repair, according to French experts sent to evaluate the damage.

Iskandar said the Israeli onslaught also cost 260 million dollars in lost earnings, especially in the service and agriculture sectors.

Delays to public and private infrastructure projects cost 75 million dollars, he said, and the displacement of 300,000 refugees from the war zone in south Lebanon another 30 million dollars.

His estimates do not include the cost of compensation and medical care the Lebanese government will pay out to victims.

The Israeli operation launched on April 11 to halt Hizballah rocket attacks against its northern territory left 170 dead and 350 wounded in Lebanon, most of them civilians, before a mainly U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement came into force early Saturday.

The agreement set up an international consultative group to help in the reconstruction of Lebanon — a measure welcomed by the Central Bank governor here.

The group will provide the Lebanese Government with "a source of finance in grants and credit to repair the damage," Salamah said.

"This external aid will help the balance of payments — which showed a surplus of 29 million dollars in the first quarter — and will allow the state, whose revenue has fallen, not to go beyond the 37 percent budget deficit which stands at four million dollars," he said.

The governor added that it may even be possible to reach the forecast growth rate in the second quarter "because the apparent solidity of the accord will encourage investors and stimulate production."

He pointed to the resumption of subscriptions to treasury bonds issued in Lebanese pounds since the ceasefire came into effect Saturday.

Bank officials said the fact that the Central Bank only dipped into its reserves to the tune of 200 million dollars in the first few days of the Israeli operation was a "good sign."

Iskandar, for his part, said the strong performance of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in diplomatic negotiations leading up to the ceasefire agreement will boost investor confidence in the Lebanese Government.

Lebanon: Police Seize Dollar Counterfeiting Ring in Dayr al-Ahmar

NC2704084796 Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 3 Apr 96 p 7

[FBIS Translated Text] Shtawrah—A combined unit from the Syrian Arab Army and the Lebanese Internal Security Forces stormed a house in Dayr al-Ahmar in the Ba'labakk District and arrested a number of suspects. It also seized 40,000 forged U.S. dollars and printing paper used to counterfeit currencies.

The suspects, the counterfeited dollars, material used to counterfeit currencies, a machine gun, and a pistol were taken to the investigation department in Shtawrah. Investigation is underway to determine if the suspects have accomplices.

Syria: Radio Reports Progress in al-Asad, Christopher Talks

JN2604144496 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1415 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad received U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher at the People's Palace at 1245 [0945 GMT] today. The meeting was attended by Dennis Ross, coordinator of the Middle East peace process; Robert Pelletreau, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Middle East affairs; and Christopher Ross, U.S. ambassador in Damascus. The meeting was also attended by Faruq al-Shar', Syrian foreign minister; Nasir Qaddur, minister of state for foreign affairs; 'Adnan 'Imran, assistant foreign minister; and Walid al-Mu'allim and Dr. Mikha'il Wahbah, members of the Syrian delegation for the peace talks.

During the meeting, the two sides completed their discussions of the proposals to address the current situation in Lebanon and the details and principles of these ideas. Progress was made.

Christopher said he had a good round of talks with His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad. In statements to reporters, he said: We made tangible progress. I am very encouraged, but I need to go to Jerusalem again to meet with Shim'on Peres. I have nothing to announce to you now, but I express my thanks to all of the parties involved in reaching a solution.

Nabih Birri, speaker of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri met with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Damascus this afternoon. Birri and al-Hariri told reporters after the meeting that tangible progress was made. They expressed optimism that an agreement will be reached within the next few hours. They said Christopher's proposals were discussed in a positive atmosphere.

Christopher left Damascus at 1545 today.

Syria: Ministry Spokesman on al-Asad, Christopher 'Understanding'

JN2604155096 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1522 GMT 26 Apr 96 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In response to a question from a SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY correspondent, a spokesman for the [Syrian] Foreign Ministry said: His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad held, since the Israeli aggression against Lebanon began, a series of meetings with the foreign ministers of Iran, France, Russia, and the EU. His excellency the president also held extensive consultations with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher over a period of more than a week. The consultations were concluded today with an understanding, which will be published tomorrow, that puts an end to the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and halts the brutal aggression against the lives of Lebanese civilians, without prejudicing the Lebanese resistance's legitimate right to resist Israeli occupation. The understanding also makes it possible for the displaced persons to return to their homes, cities, and villages.

The understanding provides for the establishment of an observation group that will ensure its implementation. The United States has pledged to organize an international consulting group, that includes France, the EU, Russia, and other parties concerned with extending help to meet the requirements of reconstruction in Lebanon.

Within this context, the United States and Israel are aware that this understanding is not an alternative to a permanent solution within the framework of achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Syria: Christopher Cited on Resumption of Negotiations 'Soon'

JN2604182596 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1730 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] In occupied Jerusalem today, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced that a cease-fire agreement was reached between Israel and the Lebanese national resistance. In a joint news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres, Christopher said that this understanding is not an alternative to a comprehensive peace agreement. At the same time, he called for an early resumption of the negotiations.

Christopher indicated that the agreement will go into effect at 0400 [0100 GMT] on 27 April, noting that the agreement is based on the 1993 understanding.

The U.S. secretary indicated that negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks will be resume soon.

Christopher said that it has been agreed to set up a committee to supervise the cease-fire. He said that Russia and the EU will take part in supporting this agreement. Christopher stressed that a peace agreement on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks must be reached through negotiations held in an atmosphere of calm and stability.

Syria: Vice President Khaddam Meets With France's de Charette

JN2604165296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1525 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam received French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette and the delegation accompanying him at 1500 [1200 GMT] today. The meeting was attended by the French ambassador in Damascus.

Khaddam and de Charette reviewed the current discussions aimed at halting the aggression against Lebanon.

Before leaving Damascus for Beirut at 1600 today, de Charette told a SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY correspondent: We have had very useful talks in Syria. There is no contradiction between the French and U.S. initiatives. We are all working for one purpose: reaching a cease-fire agreement.

Asked about France's relations with the United States, de Charette said: France has good relations with the United States. I frequently speak with Warren Christopher on the telephone. The French initiative is very effective. It spurred all the progress that was made.

Syria: French Foreign Minister Leaves for Beirut

JN2604145296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1415 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette left Damascus for Beirut at 1600 [1300 GMT] today. He was seen off at Damascus International Airport by Assistant Foreign Minister 'Adnan 'Imran, a number of senior ministry officials, the French ambassador in Damascus, and French Embassy personnel.

Syria: Damascus Radio Reports Israel-Lebanon Cease-Fire

JN2604154196 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1520 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] After meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher a short while ago, Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres announced a cease-fire in Lebanon. Peres said that an understanding will put an end to the Israeli military operation in Lebanon as of 0400 [0100 GMT] tomorrow.

At a news conference in Beirut a short while ago, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri also announced that a cease-fire understanding was reached.

Syria: Main Points Lebanon-Israel Cease-Fire Agreement Viewed

JN2604201396 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Commentary by Yusuf Maqdisi; from the "Behind the News" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] This evening, an understanding was reached by which the savage war against Lebanon will be stopped as of 0400 [0100 GMT] on 27 April. An initial reading of the written agreement indicates the following:

1. The Lebanese resistance has the right to liberate the occupied part of southern Lebanon.

2. No attacks or bloody massacres will be carried out against civilians, such as the ones perpetrated in Qana, al-Nabatiyah, and others places. Attacks on vital, economic, and utility establishments will stop. Lebanon's sovereignty will be recognized. The new understanding does not eliminate or replace Resolution 425, but emphasizes its reactivation with a return to negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks to realize a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

3. The scheme of emptying the south of its inhabitants and preventing people from remaining on their land will end, and displaced people will return to their homes. The human and social consequences of this displacement will be eliminated.

4. Despite the bloodbath, the destruction, and the savage crimes committed against it, Lebanon has emerged strong, steadfast, and is adhering to its firm rights to liberate its occupied territory. It has emerged impregnable to any attempt to penetrate its national decisionmaking and impose conditions that are not commensurate with its dignity and national sovereignty.

These are the most important results for Lebanon under the new agreement. One essential point must be emphasized, however. This point is related to the Israeli Government's policy and its military option, which resulted in its invasion of Lebanon called the Grapes of Wrath. Because of its barbarism, this brutal invasion provoked the anger of the world, including those states that Israel tried to win to its side and deceive them into believing that it was forced to carry out this bloody invasion. Peres' military option has not and will not realize gains at the expense of the will of the united people of Lebanon and Syria. All Peres did was direct his war machine to kill, destroy, and bomb electrical power stations, bridges, ambulances; to expel thousands of people; and to threaten to carry out more killing and destruction.

Peres succeeded in removing the mask of peace and showing his true nature, earning the epithet of child killer. Peres does not hesitate to sabotage the peace process whenever the peace option tightens the noose around his neck. This is support by the fact that he abandoned all his promises to regard peace as more important than the elections. Then he took up the military option with its bloody and destructive repercussions, the heinous nature of which was witnessed by the entire world.

Anyone who works for peace does not commit crimes and operations of annihilation. He does not plan to reap his fruits at the expense of others. He does not use security as a pretext to justify swallowing up or bargaining over Arab territory he is occupying. He does not always opt for war, trick the world into believing that implementing UN resolutions is futile, and create pretexts to abandon the peace process. Israel has been doing this since the Madrid conference five years ago.

At a news conference with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in Damascus on 2 April, President al-Asad commented on Israel's attack against Lebanon by saying: The fact is that Israel does not abide by the understanding reached in 1993, to which Syria was not a party.

On Israel's stand on the peace process, President al-Asad said: In my opinion, the Israelis have not yet made up their mind on the peace process. On the contrary, it seems that if we want to consider the talks as a gateway to peace, this gateway is becoming narrower. I am not saying that it is closed, but it has become extremely narrow.

Can we infer that the savage Israeli invasion of Lebanon was intended to completely close the peace gateway because Israel could not make up its mind about a just and comprehensive peace? Can we say that Syria has not spared any effort to advance the peace process toward the aims established at the Madrid conference? Syria's stands and its efforts to stop the Israeli invasion and prevent it from making gains at the expense of the Lebanese brothers embodies its adherence to Lebanon's unity, independence, and its right to liberate the occupied south. Syria's stand is based on its belief in peace as a strategic option that realizes equal peace for all. It supports the U.S. sponsor's efforts to resume the peace process on the principles from which it started, because it is the only real way to achieve peace. There is no alternative except the continuation of tension, which drags the region into danger.

Syria: Al-Asad Insists Israel Lift Naval Blockade on Lebanon

JN2804073796 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 0500 GMT 28 Apr 96

[Report by Than' al-Imam in Damascus]

[FBIS Translated Text] Syrian sources close to the cease-fire talks said that President al-Asad insists that the naval blockade against Lebanon, which has continued for more than nine months, be lifted. The sources noted that Israel did not want this at a time when Syria — the one who played a key role in reaching the new [cease-fire] agreement — insisted that this should fall within the framework of the cease fire against civilians, especially since it allows Lebanese fisherman, who are also civilians, the freedom to fish. The sources added that Israel's failure to lift this blockade will be considered a violation of the agreement.

The Syrian sources said that proceeding from its desire to create a balance among the existing forces, Syria insisted that France join the security committee.

Syria: Al-Shar' Receives Nasrallah-Led Hizballah Delegation

JN2604153696 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1515 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus — Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' received a Hizballah delegation led by Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah this afternoon. Discussions dealt with the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the current consultations to end the crisis.

Syria: Nasrallah's Statement on Hizballah Cease-Fire

LD2604182396 Tehran IRNA in English 1733 GMT 26 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Damascus, April 26, IRNA — The secretary general of the Lebanese Hizballah announced here today that for the sake of halting Israel's slaughter of the defenceless people of Lebanon, a ceasefire accord has been reached with the Zionist aggressor.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Sayid Hasan Nasrallah said: "The Hizballah forces will as before continue their resistance against the transgressions of the Zionist regime."

However, he made it clear: "We object to certain terms in this accord including the wording 'northern Israel', because in the view of the Islamic resistance 'northern Israel' is in reality northern Palestine."

Hoj. Nasrallah terming the accord as reasonable, said that according to the agreement the Zionist enemy is to halt its aggressions on the residential areas of Lebanon.

The accord is the same unwritten one that was worked out in 1993 after a wave of Israeli terrorism in southern Lebanon.

The Zionist regime is occupying a strip of southern Lebanese territory, where it has set up a mercenary force to periodically harass, kidnap and kill Lebanese resistant figures. Israel refuses to pull out its troops as stipulated by U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

The Hizballah chief said that "the resistant forces from the first day had observed the 1993 accord and had used rockets solely for halting the transgressions of the enemy."

He added: "The Zionist enemy should observe this accord and whenever the attacks of the Zionist regime cease, the Islamic resistance will stop firing any missiles at Zionist settlements in the northern part of occupied Palestine."

The Zionist entity, which was forcibly planted on Palestinian soil in 1948, has a blood-stained record of aggression and violation of human rights, both in Palestine proper and in neighbouring Arab countries.

On April 11 this year, Zionist Premier Shim'on Peres, who is contesting an election next month, launched a savage aggression by air, sea and land on the defenceless people of Lebanon killing 165, wounding over 350 others, and rendering half-a-million homeless.

The Hizballah or 'Party of God', which derives its name from the Koranic verses (5:56 and 58:22) which promise ultimate victory to the righteous against satanic forces, responded to the Zionist aggression with a daily barrage of Katyusha rockets on northern Palestine.

Peres' bid to inflict a blow on the Hizballah and thereby increase his chances in the elections, misfired and there was hardly anything the Zionists could do throughout their 16-day aggression to stop the fire of the undaunted defenders, except to target with more savagery Lebanon's civilians and the country's infrastructure.

Israel's brutality sent shockwaves around the world and resulted in outrage from most world governments. At the same time, the Hizballah's popularity soared at home and abroad as a model resistant force struggling to liberate the country.

Earlier on Friday, Hoj. Nasrallah had met Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati in Damascus to discuss the diplomatic efforts to end the Zionist aggression.

The Iranian foreign minister is in the region for almost the past week, and has held intensive talks with Syrian, French and Lebanese, officials, to try end Israel's slaughter of the innocent.

Initially, the U.S., which has expressed support for the Zionist aggression, tried to impose a one-sided ceasefire, but faced with the determined resistance of the Lebanese defenders and the diplomatic efforts of Syria, Iran, France, Russia and Italy, failed in its bid and had to modify its formula.

Iran's political support for Syria, Lebanon and the Islamic resistance coupled with the steadfastness of the Lebanese people and pressures from Islamic states, finally forced the Zionist regime and the Americans into a position where they could not continue their aggressive policies against world public opinion.

Syria: Al-Asad Receives Iranian Foreign Minister

JN2604181596 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1730 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Hafiz al-Asad received Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. 'Ali Akbar Velayati and his delegation at the al-Rawdah Palace at 1800 today.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' and Iranian Ambassador in Damascus Hasan Akhtari.

Syria: Al-Asad 'Appreciates' Velayati Role in Lebanon Accord

JN2704054796 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0415 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad received Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. 'Ali Akbar Velayati and his delegation at the al-Rawdah Palace at 1800 yesterday. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' and Hasan Akhtari, the Iranian ambassador in Damascus.

The talks addressed the regional situation and the efforts to end the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, which led to the understanding announced by the concerned parties. His excellency the president appreciates the role Velayati played to achieve the agreement announced.

Syria: Iran's Velayati 'Satisfied' With Lebanon Accord

JN2704125596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1115 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. 'Ali Akbar Velayati highly appreciates the great role of His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad. He added that his excellency the president presided over all the efforts. He did his best to achieve the positive results attained in the course of our efforts to end the Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

At a news conference at the Iranian Embassy prior to his departure from Damascus today, Dr. Velayati said: We have had full and perfect coordination with the Syrian Government. He indicated that all these efforts were actually presided over by His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad in the framework of a unified front to confront Israeli aggressions against Lebanon.

Dr. Velayati said: His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad's presiding over all these talks was good and highly appreciated. He asserted that Iranian-Syrian ties are very good. He added that there is bilateral cooperation at international forums. Such coordination is obvious in regional cooperation. This cooperation and coordination will continue, particularly in these areas and also in regard to common views on foreign policy.

Dr. Velayati pointed out that the understanding reached to end the Israeli aggression against Lebanon has given the Lebanese national resistance the freedom to resist Israeli occupation and its agents in the occupied part of southern Lebanon. He noted that the July 1993 agreement was an unwritten understanding. He added that the written agreement concluded yesterday was similar to the understanding reached in 1993. Nonetheless, the new understanding contains additional elements. Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah said that they are highly satisfied with the understanding. Similarly, we are satisfied with the written understanding agreed to by the parties concerned.

Dr. Velayati added: The Lebanese problem was initiated by Israel. This is our assessment. We have documents to prove that Israel started the attacks on Lebanese civilians.

Dr. Velayati said he is happy that the Islamic Conference Organization issued a special declaration on the crimes of aggression Israel perpetrated in southern Lebanon.

In reply to a question on the fate of resistance by Hizballah in southern Lebanon in light of this agreement, Dr. Velayati said: Hizballah is now free to struggle in the occupied territories. Each party recognized this. This is the first time in the history of the region that there is recognition of the legitimacy of resistance by a resistance faction to liberate the occupied territories. Velayati explained that any of the two parties cannot attack civilian areas. This is no different from what was agreed upon in July 1993.

Dr. Velayati said that this written understanding commits Israel and its allies, the forces of agent Antoine Lahd, not to shell civilians, and that there is a committee to monitor the situation and implement the provisions of the agreement.

In reply to a question on the nature of the self-defense enunciated in the understanding and on whether there are contacts between Iran and the United States, Dr. Velayati said: The understanding contains a provision that any of the two parties has no right to attack civilian areas in self-defense. He denied there are any Iranian-U.S. contacts. He said: We had contacts with the French, Russian, Syrian, and Lebanese sides and with Hizballah and the European Union.

On the supervision committee that was set up to monitor the provisions of the understanding, Velayati said: The committee is made up of Syria, Lebanon, France, and the United States. Rules will be set later on what should be carried out in detail in the future to monitor the agreement. The committee will meet to discuss how to carry out the monitoring process.

Dr. Velayati denied the existence of any past and present differences between Iran and Syria, or between Iran and Hizballah. He said: Our viewpoints are in agreement on southern Lebanon's steadfastness and its national resistance.

In reply to a question on the dimensions of the recent Turkish- Israeli agreement Dr. Velayati said: We deeply regret this agreement. We voiced our displeasure to Turkish officials.

Dr. Velayati left Damascus at noon today at the end of a visit to the Syrian Arab Republic. He was seen off at Damascus International Airport by Assistant Foreign Minister Raslan 'Allush, Senior Foreign Ministry officials, the Iranian ambassador in Damascus, and embassy staff.

Syria: Iran's Velayati Departs Damascus for Tehran

LD2704142296 Tehran IRNA in English
1404 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Damascus, April 27, IRNA — Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati on Saturday [27 April] left Damascus for Tehran following his extensive efforts to halt the Zionist regime's aggressions on Lebanese people.

During his stay in Syria, Velayati in two meetings with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad discussed ways and means of putting an end to the Zionist assault on Lebanon.

Velayati also had talks with the first vice-president of Syria as well as his Syrian counterpart in this regard.

Developments in Lebanon were the focal points of Velayati's discussions in Damascus with the foreign ministers of Russia, France and Italy in which proposals to establish ceasefire in the region were studied.

Velayati also held different meetings with Lebanese officials and the secretary general of Hizballah in Lebanon over the past few days.

Syria: Agreement Said 'No Alternative' to Permanent Solution

JN2704141596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1150 GMT 27 Apr 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gentlemen: Would it not have been better to spare all the bloodshed, the victims, and the losses and to pursue the peace process by providing the requirements for security and stability, based on the Security Council resolutions and the land-for-peace principle? Is Israel still entertaining the illusion that the Arabs can be forced to surrender after they are slaughtered like sheep in front of wolves thirsty for blood, murder, and destruction?

Israel insisted on revealing its true position of rejecting peace, its false claims about its search for peace, and its falsehoods about its peaceful intentions. These intentions found some support in the incomplete agreements and distorted solutions. However, the flagrant aggression against Lebanon showed that Shim'on Peres had turned his back on peace after claiming that peace was more important than election results. The Lebanese bloodbath was the price to occupy a position among extremist candidates.

Reaching a cease-fire is extremely important to stop the killing of innocent people in Lebanon. It is equally important, however, for the international community to rehabilitate its legitimacy and its resolutions to prevent Israel from renewing its pursuit of a policy of aggression and blackmail to secure new Arab concessions. This policy has proved to be a failure and has caused serious damage.

Apart from the catastrophic consequences of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, Israeli officials are aware that the only result of their aggression was to solidify the will of the Lebanese people. The Lebanese people are now more committed to the liberation of their territory, regaining their rights in full, and implementing Resolution 425 as a path to a just, comprehensive peace. They also adhere to national cohesion with Syria, which shares Lebanon's concerns and the burdens of steadfastness until occupied Lebanese southern and the Golan are returned and just and comprehensive peace, based on full withdrawal in return for full peace, is achieved.

The Israeli officials' frustration as a result of their aggression against Lebanon should once again make them think hard about a fact that are familiar with, but disregard whenever they see an opportunity to evade the requirements of peace. The fact is that Israeli occupation is the cause of the conflict and the cycle of violence and counterviolence. We cannot talk about a just and comprehensive solution that ends the crisis for good without ending the occupation, returning land and rights, and guaranteeing rights for all and the dignity of the Arab people. The Arab people have proved that they are sincerely searching for a peace that guarantees the return of their land and rights and secures their future.

Israel's barbaric aggression against Lebanon — including its savage practices and actions that contradict laws of war and peace, as President Hafiz al-Asad said — dealt a hard blow to the peace process and destroyed many hopes that had been pinned on the possibility of achieving true progress in the peace process. This progress should be based on the Security Council resolutions and finding a true prelude to security and stability in the region. This means that the international community is greatly responsible for rehabilitating the peace process. This is in the interest of the whole world, so that security and peace are achieved in a very volatile and important region.

The international community should work with the international legitimacy to achieve a just and comprehensive peace. The international community alone can force Israel to take the road to peace, pay the price, and fulfill its obligations. Justice and comprehensiveness are a prelude to security and stability, which are in the interest of all people in the region and the world.

The understanding reached to bring about a cease-fire, stop the Israeli attacks on unarmed civilians, and allow displaced Lebanese to return to their cities, villages, and homes is no alternative to a permanent solution within the framework of a just and comprehensive peace. Achieving this peace requires great efforts, in light of the great harm done to it by the Israeli aggression.

Syria: Radio Notes 'Defeat' of Israeli Objectives in Lebanon

JN2804163296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1147 GMT 28 Apr 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Both Western and Arab political circles have unanimously acknowledged that what has been achieved in the past few days, resulting in a cease-fire in Lebanon and the declared understanding agreement, is indeed a major achievement—nay, a true victory by all yardsticks. This was reflected on Lebanon and the region as a whole, and, it would not be exaggerating to say that it was also reflected on the entire world. The displaced began their return journey, their eyes and hearts full of hope. The Lebanese march of reconstruction, for which Syria provided an atmosphere of stability and security, has resumed. Meanwhile, the national Lebanese unity was enhanced, and the historic dialectical relationship between the one people in Syria and Lebanon became firmer.

Undoubtedly, the events of the past few weeks were a test which we did not choose. However, we passed it successfully and benefited from its effects for the benefit of the cohesion of our people in the two sisterly countries.

There are many details to be analyzed. Observers have examined all details. Analysts unanimously noted that what is made in Damascus can only be pan-Arab in terms of objectives and nationalistic in terms of style. Therefore, any outcome whose preparations were made in Damascus must be a victory for the Arabs, despite the setbacks they are suffering as a result of the actions of some of them on the one hand and as a result of the circumstances and changes on the other.

What did Israel achieve from its declared and undeclared objectives? We are aware of Israel's heavy material and moral losses. Observers have followed up the U.S. and Western media effort. By that we do not mean the stands of Western states, but the media effort that was exerted to save Israel's image, whether before or after the Qana massacre. We are aware that a grand and concentrated campaign accompanied Israel's retreat and the defeat of its objectives. Thus, everyone flocked to Damascus to look for a way out. The ways out that Damascus could offer proceeded from Syria's national and pan-Arab stands. These stands were firmly established by President Hafiz al-Asad in the numerous battles that were fought for a quarter-of-a-century, thus serving pan-Arab interests. This has been unreservedly acknowledged by both friend and foe.

Thus, the aggression subsided, its objectives receded, and a new phase began. The main headline of this new phase is that resistance to occupation is a legitimate right. This is despite all the attempts of the evil forces to obliterate or circumvent this right. The heroic Lebanese people's adherence to their rights has been strengthened. They are now more capable of defending their rights and of resuming the march of reconstruction, which they started in coordination, consultation, and cooperation with Syria.

Once again, events have proved that the chart for pan-Arab health and national awakening on the one hand and the just peace sought by the Arab nation on the other starts and ends in Damascus. Between these two ends are stands that have been firmly established by President Hafiz al-Asad's course, vision, style, and energy.

Syria: Papers Say Agreement 'Victory' for Lebanon

JN2904080496 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0445 GMT 29 Apr 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In an editorial entitled "Leader al-Asad's Constant Concern for Steadfast Lebanon," AL-BA'TH asks: What did the Israeli aggression against Lebanon achieve?

AL-BA'TH says: The majority of Israelis acknowledge that this aggression clearly failed to achieve any of its objectives. It is clearly evident that the Israeli aggression, which sought to encroach on Lebanese national unity, made this unity stronger and more cohesive to a degree that amazed the entire world. This aggression also turned the whole of Lebanon, with all its sects, into a resistant fighter against the occupation in word and in deed. The aggression also failed to stop the resistance operations, which escalated to confirm the utter failure of this aggression.

The paper says the agreement of understanding is an important achievement for Lebanon and its national resistance. That agreement established the principle of resistance as long as there is an occupied territory. The agreement in itself was a source of nuisance for the Israelis. News agencies report that there are sharp differences among the Israelis and that the majority of Israelis believe that the military aggression against Lebanon reaped only failure.

AL-BA'TH notes several factors that brought about Lebanon's victory in its battle against barbarism, chief among which is the splendid national unity that helped Lebanon resist the savage aggression.

AL-BA'TH adds: Among these other factors, which the brothers in Lebanon consider very essential, are Syria's positions under President Hafiz al-Asad. Syria paved the way for the brothers in Lebanon to hold out and to deal with all developments. The brothers in Lebanon say that the positions of President Hafiz al-Asad strengthened the unyielding Lebanese position vis-a-vis the aggression.

AL-BA'TH concludes: The entire world agrees that President Hafiz al-Asad always insisted on ending the Israeli aggression without allowing Israel to make any gains. Al-Asad always insisted on strengthening the unity of the Lebanese people and territory, protecting national resistance, and ending the Israeli siege on Lebanese ports. Syria and Lebanon have always worked, and will continue to work together, to defend their rights and the rights of the nation. They hope that the Arabs will learn from their experience for the benefit of the nation and its future.

Under the headline "Ending Occupation is the Basic Thing," TISHRIN notes a paragraph in the agreement of understanding which put an end to the Israeli brutal aggression against Lebanon. That paragraph says: It is recognized that the arrangements to end the current crisis between Lebanon and Israel cannot be considered an alternative to a permanent solution. The United States understands the importance of reaching a comprehensive peace in the region.

TISHRIN says: It is clear that the parties that were involved in and helped achieve this understanding adhere to the political solution and to the principles of making a comprehensive peace in the region. This is because peace provides security, guarantees calm, and leads to stability. This fact disproves the argument that places security before peace. It also refutes the allegation that occupation and adherence to occupation is part of the security Israel believes is vital and important and is above any other consideration.

TISHRIN stresses that the brutal Israeli aggression against Lebanon refuted all the allegations, arguments, and pretexts which are used to avoid the basic and substantive issue and the real, and basic, reason for the cycle of violence in the region. The issue is occupation, and only occupation. All people have the right, and are even duty bound to resist the occupiers to regain and liberate their territory. Since Israel is adhering to its occupation of southern Lebanon, then it is only natural and logical for it to confront constant and increasing resistance, through various forms, to end this occupation. This is approved by all international norms and laws.

TISHRIN says: It is unacceptable to deal with part of the issue and ignore the other parts, elements, or requirements. Peace is inseparable, and so is occupation. Occupation is the reason for the deterioration and the cause for terrorism and violence in the region.

TISHRIN concludes: Events and developments confirmed that the policy of using military force cannot solve the problem, but will instead complicate things even further. This is the conclusion of any observer of the Israeli aggression and its aftermath. Israel reaped only failure. This is not the first time Israel finds itself in such a dilemma. Despite this, Israel should learn the lesson to spare itself further dilemmas. It should respond favorably to the agreement of understanding and should understand that the solution starts with ending occupation and abiding by the requirements of comprehensive peace.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Taleban Spokesmen Disagree on Kabul Withdrawal Accord

LD2704114796 Tehran IRNA in English 0924 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, April 27, IRNA — Spokesmen for the Taleban expressed contradictory views on the readiness of the group to withdraw from the vicinity of Kabul and retreat to other areas as far as Vardak and Logar.

Earlier this week at the end of his visit to Mashhad, northeastern Iran, Yar Mohammad, Herat governor and a leader of the group announced that he had agreed with Iranian officials on a Taleban pullback from around Kabul. Meanwhile, a Taleban spokesman Vakil Ahmad denied such an agreement.

Vakil Ahmad said that the two sides' discussions focused on controlling the production and smuggling of narcotics in areas under the control of the Taleban, as well as border issues and the acceptance of Iran's mediation to establish peace in Afghanistan.

He stressed the issue of the withdrawal of Taleban forces from the Kabul area was not correct.

An Afghan Government spokesman considered this contradiction as resulting from the internal discord in the group, saying that Yar Mohammad's accord is although supported by Taleban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar but two other Taleban factions under external pressure oppose such a withdrawal.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official implicitly confirmed on Friday [26 April] afternoon that the government was ready to accept the Taleban condition that the government forces would not occupy the areas evacuated by the Taleban.

Afghanistan: Talks Between Government, Hezb-e Eslami 'Progressing Well'

LD2704115896 Tehran IRNA in English 0953 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, April 27, IRNA — The talks between Afghan Government and Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] led by Golboddin Hekmatyar are progressing well as both are trying to build confidence and remove misunderstandings, Afghan sources said here Saturday [27 April].

However, the Hezb sources in Islamabad ruled out any new talks with Taleban militia for their inflexible attitude.

The sources told IRNA that the Supreme Coordination Council, the four party Afghan alliance, have been negotiating with student militia for the past several months. However, the talks remained deadlocked because of rigid attitude of the militia which have been besieging Kabul for the past several months.

The Supreme Coordination Council groups National Islamic Movement of North [Jonbesh-e Meli] led by General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam, National Liberation Front [Jabha-ye Nejat-e Meli] of Sebghatollah Mojadeddi and Hezb-e Wahdat [Unity Party] faction of Karim Khalili besides Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami.

The Hezb sources, to a question on the proposal for an intra-Afghan conference and imposition of arms embargo on all factions, said, "Hezb welcomes any proposal which can help restore lasting peace in Afghanistan."

Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad Mehdi Akhundzadeh said last week that Tehran and Islamabad were trying for an all party Afghan meeting to help the warring factions to patch their differences.

Afghanistan: Government-Hezb-e Eslami Talks Welcomed

LD2704210996 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] We hope that the similarity of views and solidarity between Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] and Jami'yat-e Eslami [Islamic Society] will also lead to a similar understanding with other parties. This point has been made by esteemed Daneshyar, the deputy head of the organization committee of Jami'yat-e Eslami and the head of Jami'yat-e Eslami's goodwill delegation, in his meeting with the esteemed Hekmatyar in Laghman Province, reports the MOJAHED newspaper. He added: A series of talks and contacts have been started to secure the continuous active presence of Hezb-e Eslami in the political scene of the country and to form an alliance with Hezb-e Eslami. We definitely want the establishment of a broad-based Islamic state and government [as heard] without ignoring the others.

The report also includes the remarks of Ustad Sadat, a member of the Jami'yat-e Eslami delegation for talks with Hezb-e Eslami, which reads: These messages are the messages of our martyrs and of the mojahedin, who have suffered in order to set up an Islamic regime. We promise the soldiers of the revolution that we will not spare any sacrifice, selflessness, and necessary flexibility to achieve this goal.

Mohammad Ebrahim Warsaji, the mayor of Kabul and a member of the goodwill delegation, said: After the honor of driving out the Russian invaders, our jihad leaders should avoid the perpetual defamation of being the cause of the disintegration of Afghanistan. Afghanistan needs a national political system, which will obviously be an Islamic one, through which it can put an end to the problems of this nation.

The report also includes some remark made by esteemed 'Abdol Ghafar Stanezay, the minister of transport, and a member of the delegation, which reads: In order to keep the Islamic movement alive, Ustad Rabbani is ready for any compromise.

At the end of the report, MOJAHED quotes esteemed Hekmatyar, as saying: [Words indistinct] Jihad should be revived, the nation should be awakened to acknowledge the realities. I am in complete agreement with the brothers. The Central Council of the party unanimously decided that Hezb-e Eslami should continue its talks with the government. Therefore, on my behalf reassure, a hundred percent, the brothers in Kabul.

Afghanistan: Rabbani Discusses Peace Talks in 'Id al-Adha Speech

LD2804205396 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1630 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Esteemed Professor Borhanoddin Rabbani, the president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, today, 28 April, led the 'Id al-Adha prayers in a mosque in Wazir Akbar Khan Mena where a large number of people from Kabul had congregated. Before the prayers he delivered a scholarly speech. Now we invite you to listen to it.

[Begin Rabbani recording] [passage omitted] Our problems have internal and foreign dimensions. Although the main cause of the problems is foreign conspiracy and interference, which is reflected in the internal problems, the Islamic State of Afghanistan has chosen as its main objective intra-Afghan talks and calls on all opposition parties to work to ensure security and to stop fighting. It is continuing this course of conduct.

So far, talks have been held with different parties and groups. We hope that the talks with different groups including brother [Golboddin] Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] and Mr. Khalili's Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami [Islamic Unity Party] to produce a result. We are hoping that our talks and meetings will finally reach a conclusive and successful result. We have also asked parties such as Taleban, who have chosen fighting as a code of conduct and who relentlessly fire rockets into residential areas in Kabul City and into other parts, to elect the path of talks instead of fighting. Because the experience of the past four years has shown that the war would not resolve any problem. Neither will those who want to seize power by fighting achieve this goal, nor will they achieve any other aim, be it military or political, through fighting.

We are hoping that all of us should have realized that there is no other way for the solution of problems but talks and understanding. Important steps have been taken in connection with intra-Afghan talks which will be continued more vigorously until a final result is achieved. As far as foreign interference is concerned, we have told the countries which interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan that they should not strain their relations with Afghanistan by their futile and meaningless interference. Through different channels, contacts with the interfering countries and bring to bear international pressure on them, we are trying to convince them that interference is no more in their interest nor is it in the interest of peace and security in the region. We hope that with the cessation of foreign interference and with the success of intra-Afghan talks, our current problems will completely be resolved.

We hope that after the restoration of peace our faithful nation, which has suffered extremely both during its struggle against the foreign aggressor and due to foreign conspiracies, will be able to embark on the reconstruction of their country in an atmosphere of peace and security.

Our hope is that all Muslims during the hajj ceremony and Afghan Muslims at mosques will pray together to God to make this 'Id the 'Id of peace and fraternity and the 'Id of putting an end to the fighting in our country for good. And thus He will enable us to hold hands and to start work on healing one others wounds and to embark on the reconstruction of our country. These words said, I wish from God forgiveness for you and myself. [end recording]

Afghanistan: 'Top Official' Says Hekmatyar To Rejoin Kabul Government

BK2704122796 Hong Kong AFP in English 1217 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KABUL, April 27 (AFP) — Ex-Afghan premier Golboddin Hekmatyar is on the verge of rejoining the Kabul government two years after launching a bloody coup against his former foes here, a top official said Saturday [27 April].

"We can say we are on the threshold of the implementation of some of the political agreements made between our two parties, President Borhanoddin Rabbani's spokesman 'Abdol Aziz Murad told AFP.

"Engineer Hekmatyar has now made up his mind to come to take up certain posts in Kabul, although technically some more work has to be done. Hopefully we will see this implementation very soon," he added.

Other official sources said the final details of the accord could be settled in as little as six days.

There has been speculation over recent months that Hekmatyar may soon return to Kabul, but Murad's comments are the first by a senior official indicating that the deal is nearing conclusion, analysts said.

The comments came after months of negotiations between Kabul and Hekmatyar — who split violently with the government in 1994 — over a political and military pact between his Hezb-e Eslami faction and Rabbani's administration.

The former mojahedin leader has signed an agreement giving him the posts of prime minister, minister of defence and minister of finance in return for allying himself with the beleaguered government, sources here said.

They have also revealed that the two sides had signed another accord for a joint military effort aimed at routing the Taleban militia from their positions around the besieged capital Kabul.

But Murad dismissed the claims, saying the pact with the Hezb was aimed solely at creating "an axis for peace. The objective is not to create a military alliance which would trigger fighting," he added.

Murad said there were no major obstacles blocking an immediate implementation of the political pact, which would see the coalition government revert to almost the same form it had when it came to power exactly four years ago.

Murad said the apparent progress in the talks had come as visiting Pakistani opposition senator Qazi Hussain Ahmad shuttled between the two groups in an attempt to speed the conclusion of their pact.

"He has been striving successfully to sort out any remaining differences between the two parties, something which both parties are very interested in, " he said.

The leader of Pakistan's Jam'iyat-e Eslami party, who is a long-standing friend of Hekmatyar's, was invited to Kabul early this week by Rabbani.

Hekmatyar and ethnic Uzbek warlord General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam had launched a massive and bloody coup attempt against the government in January 1994, when the Hezb leader was prime minister.

Their forces were eventually repelled by the Rabbani's troops after months of intense fighting which claimed thousands of civilian lives. Since then Hekmatyar has lost much of the land he once controlled.

Observers have said that Hekmatyar now needs the government if he wants to regain some power, while Kabul needs ethnically-Pashtun Hekmatyar to broaden the base of their troubled Tajik-dominated administration.

Prospects of an unlikely alliance between the former arch enemies comes as several of the former mojahedin resistance parties who ousted the Soviet army from Afghanistan are realizing that they all have a common enemy in the Taleban militia, political analysts have said.

The relatively newly formed Islamic movement has seized control of about half the country and has vowed it will capture the remaining areas and impose strict Islamic law across the whole country. Its leaders have refused to share power with any other group.

Afghanistan: Taleban Rockets Kill 24 People

*LD2704145396 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto
to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 27 Apr 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] As a result of rocket barrages on different parts of Kabul, 24 innocent people were martyred and number of others injured. Reports reaching Radio Message of Freedom say a rocket landed by a bus and martyred [break in reception] bus passengers. The reports say that in separate incidents in other parts of Kabul 21 people were killed a number of others injured and several houses were destroyed. The Defense Ministry of the Kabul administration has blamed the Taleban for the rocket attacks. Thirteen Taleban have been killed in retaliatory attacks by the Kabul administration.

Afghanistan: 5 Killed in Taleban Rocket Attack on Kabul

*LD2804151096 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto
to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 28 Apr 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday, five innocent people were killed and a number of others injured when the city of Kabul was hit by rockets. Two houses were also destroyed during the attack. A Kabul administration spokesman blamed the Taleban who are based in the south of Kabul.

Afghanistan: Government Forces Attack Taleban Positions Around Kabul

LD2804084096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0330 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Afghan Government forces have attacked Taleban positions around Kabul. Here is our correspondent in Kabul with a report.

[Begin correspondent's recording] Afghan Government planes have bombarded the positions of the opposition group Taleban. In the past 24 hours Afghan Government forces have also fired rockets against the Taleban base in Charasiab, 30 kilometres south of Kabul. There are no reports about casualties resulting from the bombardments and rocket attacks by government forces. The sources from both sides have made no comment on this so far.

The Taleban group carried out artillery shelling of the center of Kabul yesterday. Shells hit a car and a crowded Kabul street left at least five dead and several wounded.

Taleban forces, which took positions against government forces last spring, have fired thousands of shells into Kabul since then, leaving thousands of casualties. [end recording]

India

India: Uttar Pradesh on 'Red Alert' After Bomb Explosion on Bus

BK2704135596 Hong Kong AFP in English 1331 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] NEW DELHI April 27 (AFP) — At least 10 people were killed and 24 injured when a bomb ripped through a bus in the industrial town of Modinagar near the Indian capital on Saturday [27 April], the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

The powerful blast, which occurred around 4:00 p.m. (1030 GMT), ripped the roof off the bus, damaged nearby shops and injured several pedestrians, the news agency said.

It was not immediately clear if the blast in Modinagar, some 50 kilometres (31 miles) northwest of New Delhi, was linked to the first leg of general elections which began in parts of India on Saturday.

Voters are not scheduled to go to the polls in Modinagar, in Uttar Pradesh state, until May 7.

Police said a red alert has been sounded in Uttar Pradesh following the blast.

There were no claims of responsibility but Uttar Pradesh police chief S.K. Rizvi was quoted as saying that a "terrorist hand could not be ruled out."

The injured have been taken to the nearby industrial suburb of Ghaziabad, PTI said. It said the bus was headed for the northern town of Roorkee from New Delhi.

India: 11 Killed in Uttar Pradesh Bomb Blast

BK2704160996 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Uttar Pradesh, 11 persons were killed and 25 injured when a powerful bomb exploded in a bus at Modinagar in Ghaziabad District this evening. According to an official spokesman in Lucknow, the condition of many of the injured is stated to be serious. The spokesman described the blast as the handiwork of terrorists. A magisterial inquiry has been ordered into the incident. The bus carrying 67 passengers was on its way from Delhi to Roorkee. A bomb disposal squad of the Delhi Police and a battalion of the PAC [Provincial Armed Constabulary] have reached the spot. The governor, Mr. Motilal Vora, has sanctioned an ex gratia payment of 1 lakh rupees each to the next of kin of those killed in explosion.

India: Kashmiri Militant Group Claims Responsibility for Bombing

BK2804083596 Hong Kong AFP in English 0525 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Srinagar, India April 28 (AFP) — A little known Muslim militant group in Kashmir on Sunday [28 April] claimed responsibility for a bomb blast in a bus which killed 13 people in an Indian town.

The Jammu and Kashmir Islami Harkat-ul-Momneen said in a statement that it carried out the massive explosion Saturday along with the Khalistan Liberation Force, a Sikh militant group.

The Urdu-language statement, delivered to AFP here, said the bus was targetted because it carried activists of India's ruling Congress (I) party and the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party).

Thirteen people were killed and 35 others injured when a powerful bomb ripped apart a crowded bus on the main street of Modinagar, close to New Delhi, blowing off its roof and shattering windows of nearby shops and homes.

Modinagar is located in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state.

The police had said it was not clear if the blast was linked to India's staggered general elections which began Saturday with nearly 100 million people voting across 10 states and four federal territories.

The Harkat-ul-Momneen had claimed setting off a powerful blast in a hotel in New Delhi on April 20 which killed 17 people including foreigners, but authorities later said it was not a bomb.

The Momneen statement said: "After Delhi, now Uttar Pradesh has been attacked. We will continue these blasts till Kashmiris are given their rights."

"This is the second gift" to India, it added.

Muslim militants waging a bloody separatist campaign in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, frequently claim responsibility for bomb explosions elsewhere in the country.

India: Senior Army Officer Killed by Suspected Assam Militants

BK2804125596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Assam, suspected militants shot dead a senior army officer and injured another seriously in the Kamakhya Temple complex at Guwahati today. Police sources said Lieutenants Colonel D. Tyagi and A.K. Ghosh were coming out of the temple after a puja [prayer] when suspected militants suddenly opened fire injuring both of them. They were immediately shifted to the Army Hospital in Guwahati where Lieutenant Colonel Tyagi succumbed to his injuries. The condition of Lieutenant Colonel Ghosh is stated to be critical. Police have cordoned off the area and a massive hunt launched to nab the culprits.

India: External Affairs Minister Interviewed on Foreign Policy

BK2604152196 Delhi OUTLOOK in English 24 Apr 96 p 20

["Excerpts" of an interview with Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee by Sunil Narula; place and date not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Narula] How do you rate your party's performance on the foreign policy front?

[Mukherjee] During the last five years we have made a conscious effort to build close relations with our neighbours, operationalised SAPTA [South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement], staked our claim for permanent membership of the Security Council, and actively engaged in all major international negotiations. Recently, I concluded two important treaties with Nepal and Bhutan.

But with Pakistan we have not been able to make much headway. Relations with Pakistan have to be improved and I hope after the elections there will be another initiative so that issues can be resolved through dialogue.

With regard to China, we have been able to improve our relations substantially, particularly after the visit of our Prime Minister and signing of the agreement on peace and tranquility in the border areas. The border trade which was suspended in 1959 has resumed. We have resumed border trade with Myanmar [Burma] also. Besides, cooperation with the Myanmar government to tackle the problem of the northeast insurgent groups has been effective.

[Narula] Last year when you gave the Jawaharlal Nehru award to Aung San Suu Kyi, there was a setback.

[Mukherjee] I wouldn't say there was a setback. They recognise our policies, we do not interfere in the internal matters of any country. It was made quite clear that this is not interference in their internal politics, but it is just a recognition of one individual for her contribution to peace and humanity.

We have been able to improve our relations with Russia. At one point there was doubt whether the special relationship we had with them would continue. The bilateral visits of leaders — Rao, Yeltsin and Primakov recently — clearly demonstrate the solid foundation of our relations.

Our relationship with the US has also improved. When I say so I keep at the back of my mind certain developments like providing arms to Pakistan by amending the Pressler Amendment. Despite that there has been a substantial improvement. The US has emerged as the single largest trading partner of India and in the last four years bilateral trade has increased from $5 billion to $9 billion.

[Narula] Does it mean there hasn't been any failure in your foreign policy?

[Mukherjee] Foreign policy is a continuing process. It is not like a shopping list that you buy something and do not buy something. It is also not like a competition. We have to build relationships by keeping the long-term and medium-term interests in view.

[Narula] Talks on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) are at an advanced stage. What is the Congress position?

[Mukherjee] We are constructively engaged in the negotiations. Therefore, I can't say what will be the outcome. Now CTBT cannot be an end in itself. It must lead to nuclear disarmament and there should be some linkage with it. The details have to be worked out through talks. It is too premature to comment.

[Narula] What do you feel about China's arms and technology supply to Pakistan?

[Mukherjee] Pakistan is on a buying spree from every arms market. We cannot just compete with them. But we are aware that acquisition of arms by Pakistan seriously enhances our threat perception. Over the last four-and-a-half decades, our experience has been that if any shot was fired from Pakistan, it was directed only against India. We are concerned about it and we have to gear up our defence preparedness.

[Narula] An increased defence preparedness means more defence expenditure?

[Mukherjee] Of course, it will have to be stepped up. Without expenditure, how can we be up to the mark.

[Narula] The US is opposed to India's entry into the Security Council.

[Mukherjee] We will not like to disclose all the support we are getting. So far as the permanent membership is concerned, no consensus is emerging about the expansion. So if someone points out, 'you missed the train', which did not appear on the platform, what can I say?

India: 'Young Turks' Plan To Oust Rao if Congress Loses

BK2704133096 Delhi THE ASIAN AGE in English 26 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by Swaraj Thapa]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dissidents within the Congress are malting plans with the recently expelled party stalwarts to dislodge Mr Narasimha Rao from leadership.

Some of these dissidents are also learnt to be in touch with the two leaders of the NF-LF [National Front-Left Front] combine, West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu and Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav to work out an alliance with them to form the next government.

According to sources, among those who are attempting to topple Mr Narasimha Rao from party presidentship are the hawala [corruption scandal]-hit former ministers such as Mr Madhavrao Scindia, Mr Kamal Nath, Mr Balram Jakhar, as well as the rebels from Tamil Nadu like Mr Chidambaram. The group has not yet reached a consensus on a replacement for Mr Narasimha Rao, but former Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar is an obvious alternative. "It would really depend on the number of Congress MPs [members of parliament] the leader can command to his side after the elections," a former Union minister told The Asian Age.

According to the sources, the plan to oust Mr Narasimha Rao would be put into operation only if the party fares badly in the coming elections, and gets less than 150 seats. The rebel group is ready to rally silently behind Mr Rao if the Congress gets anything above 170 seats.

The debate now raging among the dissidents is over where to draw the 'lakshman rekha' [line]. The calculations are crucial to ensure that they do not get left out in the cold like Mr Arjun Singh earlier.

While some of the dissidents believe they would be able to pull off a coup even if the Congress gets around 160 seats, others in the group feel a revolt will be successful only if the Congress gets less than 150 seats.

"In case the Congress gets upwards of 170, Mr Rao is sure to continue as party president. Then it would be very difficult to engineer a change in the leadership. If such a thing happens they would definitely comply with the others and accept Rao as leader," said the sources.

Four major opinion poll surveys done by various agencies in the country have already been projecting the number of seats the Congress is likely to get varying between 140 and 185.

Among the possible coup leaders, Mr P. Chidambaram and Mr Madhavrao Scindia have already been expelled from the party. Mr Scindia has stated that he would be ready to return to the Congress if it was not headed by Mr Rao. Another of the hawala-hit ministers, Mr Kamal Nath, has also been issued a notice by the AICC [All India Congress Committee] for his strong statements from Chhindwara. He had recently said that following the elections, the party must sit down to elect a new leader. After the notice, however, Mr Kamal Nath has grown more reticent. According to sources, however, he is believed to be in touch with Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav. There is an attempt to persuade these two that if an alliance was forged, it would be in the interests of everyone if they struck a deal with the party and not with Mr Rao.

India: Rao Promises To Reserve Seats, Attempts To Win Women's Vote

BK2604101696 Madras THE HINDU in English 24 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by B. Muralidhar Reddy]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In a bid to woo the women voters, the Congress(I) president and the Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, held out an assurance to reserve over 30 per cent of the seats in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies to women candidates if his party was voted to power in the general elections and made a passionate appeal to the voters to elect the Congress for stability the development and prosperity of the country.

Addressing an election meeting of an estimated 40,000 people in the home district of the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, at the local grounds here, Mr. Rao repeatedly emphasised that the Congress alone had proved its ability to give a stable government and the nation could ill afford to go through a spell of instability at the present juncture.

Mr. Rao used the reported statement made by the former Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, in Bombay two days ago, about the difficulties involved for the NF-LF [National Front-Left Front] combine to form a stable government, to drive home his theme on stability. "I do not know under what circumstances he has made the statement. But he has let the cat out of the bag and it is for you people to realise the implications".

The Congress president's assurance on 30 per cent reservations to women in Assemblies and Parliament came after he explained the various benefits bestowed by his government on women by reserving posts in local bodies. The announcement was greeted with mild applause from the women present in the audience. The hour-long speech of Mr. Rao was received with attention from the gathering despite the scorching sun at 4 p.m.

Mr. Narasimha Rao's attack on the two Telugu Desam factions was veiled and comparatively mild. At one stage the Congress(I) president told the gathering that while it was alright for them to have chosen the Telugu Desam in the Assembly elections, they should give a serious thought to the implications of having a "kichri government" [consisting of a combination of parties with different ideologies] at the Centre.

Mr. Rao said it had become a fashion among all political parties to throw stones at him and went on to add that he would not mind it if it helped the country. "Today the need of the hour is to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. India is like an elephant and if it falls, only another elephant can lift it".

The Congress president maintained that the new, economic policies adopted by his government had-proved right and with the greater involvement of the private sector in industrial development, the Government got the opportunity to invest in social welfare sectors. In support of his argument, Mr. Rao cited various rural development and social welfare programmes taken up by his government in the last five years. "We have not left out any single section of the society. The ratio of people below the poverty line came down from 43 to 22 per cent".

At the same time, Mr. Rao admitted that his Government had taken a calculated risk in going ahead with the reforms programme. "My Communist friends accused me of depriving job opportunities to millions of people. Today I am proud to say that we have not retrenched a single worker. Thank god I did not go wrong in my assessment. If I had gone wrong, we would have been wiped out".

The rest of the speech of Mr. Rao was on the familiar theme of the circumstances under which he took over as the Prime Minister and how the country would have been bankrupt if the Opposition government had continued in power for another ten days. "There would not have been enough foreign exchange to import kerosene and fertilizers".

The Congress president urged the gathering to give another chance to his party to complete the unfinished agenda. He said that the programme of conversion of rail tracks to broad gauge is half-way through and wondered as what point can be proved by replacing the government at this juncture.

Obviously worried over the prospects of the rebels spoiling the chances of the official candidates, Mr. Rao appealed to the electorate not to bother about the candidates and vote for the Congress. "We have selected candidates to the best of our ability. Some are good and others not so good. After all we are not a Selection Commission. But I can assure you they are better than last time. He also used the opportunity to warn against any attempts towards rigging and asked his party workers to be vigilant against such attempts.

Our Tirupati Special Correspondent reports: Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, has cautioned that any dislocation caused to his Government when it is in the midst of implementing the national agenda will mean a dislocation to the entire developmental process he had set in motion.

Addressing an hour long election meeting today at the district headquarters town of Chittoor, Mr. Narasimha Rao covered the entire spectrum of the country's economic and political scenario and said it would be disastrous for the nation and for the people themselves to disturb the Congress(I) Government as it was in the mid-stream of a 10-year comprehensive programme it had embarked upon for the overall development of the nation and its populace.

Mr. Rao asserted that the Congress(I) alone had the necessary wherewithal to protect the country's unity and integrity and also to take the country forward in the economic, industrial and trade sectors. He had a jibe at the political parties which, without haying any specific agenda, developed a "fashion" for "Narasimha Rao-baiting" and said that they must realise that such things would not take them anywhere.

Building up a strong case for a "decisive majority", Mr. Rao said anything short of a comfortable majority would render his task difficult during the next five "crucial years" to complete the multi-pronged programme he had launched. Mr. Rao took pride that a number of nations were emulating the Indian experiment of economic reforms which took the country to the top slot of developing nations.

India: Prime Minister Interviewed on Elections

BK2604141596 Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 30 Apr 96 p 28-33

["Exclusive" interview with Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao by Senior Editor Raj Chengappa "on board an Air Force Boeing 737" between Andhra Pradesh and Orissa; date not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Chengappa] What are the major issues you would be emphasising during the campaign?

[Rao] I have always emphasised the need for political stability in the country without which nothing else can be done. The people realise this very well. And, of course, the policies and programmes which we have been following have been found to be useful by the people. It is clear to the people that if they have benefited by these programmes, then the Congress government holds a much brighter chance of continuing and enhancing them than any other party.

[Chengappa] Isn't the stability of your own party under serious question after the revolt by certain sections in Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradeshi

[Rao] I don't think the Congress has suffered any real loss by even important individuals going out.

[Chengappa] Why do you say that?

[Rao] Because the policies remain the same. Congress remains the same. I can understand if someone going out of the Congress has something new to offer that our party doesn't. Then, of course, the question of comparison of which is better and which is worse will arise. But they have nothing—everybody just calls himself Congress. So what kind of loss can there be except the loss of a few persons? I have all respect for the persons but organisationally how can anyone believe that such a thing could lead to the erosion of the Congress in the real or political sense.

[Chengappa] But in Tamil Nadu, the revolt occurred because the view of the party's cadre was ignored completely.

[Rao] No, we did take the cadre's view into consideration and they are still with the Congress. It was not an easy choice (the alliance with the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam]) but with the choice having been made, with every passing day, I get reports that those who had been doubtful a few days ago are shedding their doubts and coming back to the Congress.

[Chengappa] What is the rationale behind the tie-up with the AIADMK?

[Rao] It was a political decision taken by the Working Committee after going through the pros and cons of all the alternatives.

[Chengappa] Even though in the past Jayalalitha has been critical of you?

[Rao] That every party in the past has been critical of the Congress is really not much of a discovery. The point is that we are dealing with a situation of assessing the needs of the whole country. And that means we give a subsidiary place to what we say to each other and a dominant one to what is good for the country.

[Chengappa] In the last round of assembly elections, your party was decimated in substantial strongholds such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtr. How do you rate your party's chances in the coming elections?

[Rao] I think the people are very clear about the difference between the Lok Sabha and the state legislature. If it is for the Centre, they will assess those people who are contending for power at the Centre and if it is at the state level, they will make the same assessment with regard to their own experiences and their expectations. They have the discriminating power and the good sense to judge each election on its own merit and scope.

[Chengappa] You haven't been much of a success as the president of the Indian National Congress.

[Rao] I don't agree with this point. Had that been so, I would not have continued as the Congress president. Despite the fact that I had expressed a desire to have a different person as the Congress president, the circumstances within the party more or less forced me to continue.

[Chengappa] Some of the criticism has been that you have not held organisational elections and that the Congress(I) Working Committee is hardly ever convened.

[Rao] In fact, I was the one that held elections after 30 years, so let's not forget that. As for the next election, everyone agrees that we can't have it for various reasons which everyone saw. These decisions were taken by the Working Committee itself. There is no question of my overruling anyone or not wanting to have elections. Nor was I going to get anything extra by way of advantage for not holding elections.

[Chengappa] But during your tenure there have been major splits, like Arjun Singh moving out and N.D. Tiwari's exit.

[Rao] You have to ask them why they preferred to leave. In my view, there was absolutely no reason for them to do so.

[Chengappa] There is a feeling that you are trying to build a personal cult around you just as Mrs Gandhi did in the past.

[Rao] I don't. I always avoid deciding things myself. I always take decisions after consulting others.

[Chengappa] On the subject of decisions, people say you are a ditherer.

[Rao] I take decisions. And I don't take decisions which is also a decision. Not taking a decision in certain cases is better than taking a hasty one that could lead to conflicts, confrontation and disturbances. I don't hesitate in taking a decision when it is necessary. But I don't take decisions just for the sake of taking them.

[Chengappa] You haven't so far mentioned corruption. Don't you think it is going to be the main issue?

[Rao] I do not think it is going to be the main issue. But there is no need to be sweeping it under the carpet. One has to take note of the fact that it has figured in the minds of the people, this time possibly more than any other time. I have taken note of this.

[Chengappa] What do you think has been the impact of the Jain hawala scandal?

[Rao] The entire case is in the Court and I would not like to discuss it.

[Chengappa] What about Atal Behari Vajpayee's criticism that you are also involved?

[Rao] Even that too.

[Chengappa] One issue it has helped focus on is political funding. Will the recent Supreme Court restriction on funds for campaigning make a difference?

[Rao] If it can be implemented, it would be definitely beneficial.

[Chengappa] Is it possible to implement it?

[Rao] It is possible to the extent that everything else is possible. We can't say it is not possible and give it up. We have to try. Implementation is not easy but that is no reason to give it up. It only means you have to be more determined to implement it.

[Chengappa] Will the next Parliament be a hung one as is widely perceived?

[Rao] I don't think that there would be a hung Parliament because people are also aware that it is not in the best interests of the country. The government will not able to do its best in a free manner and there is very little accountability when too many parties join in a coalition. I don't think people will vote for a coalition government. It will be a decisive vote for the Congress and I have no doubt about that.

[Chengappa] What would be the number of seats you estimate?

[Rao] I wouldn't like to go into figures but I will say it is going to be a clear majority for the Congress.

[Chengappa] Why should the Indian voter give your government another five years to rule?

[Rao] The answer is very simple. The Congress Government's performance in the last five years has been extremely good. It has given stability to the country, unprecedented strength to the economy. And a general feeling of satisfaction on the law and order front. It has enhanced India's prestige abroad. It has a massive anti-poverty programme. On the whole, it is the performance on which no other party has matched or is expected to match.

[Chengappa] Before the elections were announced, there was talk of inducting new faces into the Congress and the so-called fresh blood. Have you lived up to the promise in the seat selection?

[Rao] A very large number of people have been changed and new faces have come. The figures are being finalised now, but a rough estimate is that it is around 280. The change came in a natural way and was not manipulated.

Many people didn't want to contest again. Many people were found not suitable or not strong enough to contest. Even without realising how things were shaping, we went on giving tickets based on merit. And this is the result.

[Chengappa] Muslims did not appear to support your party in the last round of assembly elections. Are you confident of their support this time round?

[Rao] To say that a community as a whole votes or does not vote is not quite correct. All sections of the people generally vote according to individual wishes.

[Chengappa] Many Muslims are angry that the Ayodhya issue isn't resolved and that you haven't kept your promise of "undoing the wrong".

[Rao] It is resolved for the present in the sense that until the end of the case there is nothing possible. There can be no change in the situation till then. I'm not prepared to say anything more about it right now except that it is a decision of the Supreme Court that is being obeyed.

[Chengappa] Experts say the benefits of your economic reforms have so far not trickled down to the poor.

[Rao] The poor have got much more benefits directly from the Government. For them to wait for it to trickle down from the industry would take five years. Knowing that it could not be done immediately, we have by passed the whole thing. We siphone off so many benefits to the people directly from the Government. So the poor are not feeling neglected.

[Chengappa] Why hasn't your government met with the same success in Kashmir as it did in Punjab?

[Rao] What was the duration of the Punjab problem? Eleven years. What is the duration of the Kashmir problem? Five and a half years. Today, we are in a position to hold elections. Kashmir is a much more complicated problem and still is very complicated. I don't think we have lost time on Kashmir. We have been tackling it as firmly and as expeditiously as it is possible. We have had setbacks like Charar-e-Sharief and so on. But the situation is enormously better today. And we will be in a position to hold these elections.

[Chengappa] If you are elected prime minister, what would be the five most important things you would want to do for the country?

[Rao] Much will depend on the circumstances then, but on the whole, the programmes we have undertaken have been found to be good. Much more needs to be done on the same lines. We cannot arbitrarily say we are going to do this or that because the programmes we have taken up are comprehensive. Maybe they have to be done with much more depth. Maybe increased. Or given to people in a more transparent manner. Not allowing leakage. There is so much that can be done to refine the programmes plus, in the process, take up new ones too.

[Chengappa] While your focus was on the economy so far, do you plan to tackle social issues in future?

[Rao] The economic thrust has to be there because that is the basis for stability. But there is enormous scope for social reform which unfortunately has not been taken seriously. It is not a subsidiary programme, it is as basic or as critical as the economic programmes. In the society, there are so many evils. The politician is supposed to be bringing all those evils, but that is also not completely true. Everyone is a contributory factor to that. Someone has to see where it to be cut down. And that requires great strength of character because there again one has to fight against the status quo. Take corruption. It is not just corruption in politics. It is something that has permeated into the life of the people so you have root it out from wherever it is. And it cannot be done unless someone is determined to do it.

[Chengappa] What is the kind of leadership you think this country requires?

[Rao] I think the country requires a mature and sensible leadership which takes decisions carefully and does not involve people into too many unusual or abnormal situations. The people want peace and the normalcy to prosper with government support.

[Chengappa] What has been the philosophy that has guided you in the past five years in terms of leadership?

[Rao] One has to take the overall interest of the people into account not one's own predilections. This involves a great deal of self-application. Also, I found that the more you do for the people, the more they want you to do. The expectations only increase and it is difficult to meet them all the time. Doing your best and being seen to be doing your best, that to me is the crux.

[Chengappa] What has been the most satisfying thing for you as prime minister?

[Rao] That the country is on the up swing, politically it is stable and internationally it has acquired a definite place. On the whole, the country exudes optimism. And this needs to be stepped-up further.

[Chengappa] Do you have any regrets?

[Rao] I believe there is no point in regretting this or that. I take things as they come.

[Chengappa] You are going to be 75 years old soon. Are you fit enough to rule for the next five years?

[Rao] Yes (makes a gesture of touching the wooden table). My health has endured. And I find it as good as it ever was in the past five years. I don't see any deterioration.

[Chengappa] What has being prime minister for five years taught you about life?

[Rao] It has only confirmed my way of looking at things. You cannot expect a future of your hundred per cent liking. It is just not possible. But when you are given a duty, a single-minded attention to do it is perhaps the best way of keeping yourself free from all the distractions. You also achieve better results that way.

India: Brisk Voting Reported in Elections

BK2704101596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Reports of brisk polling are reaching the Election Commission in New Delhi from all over the country. A spokesman of the commission told our correspondent a short while ago that 25 to 30 percent votes have been polled in the first six hours since this morning in the first phase of polling to the 11th Lok Sabha and state assembly elections. He said there are indications that polling percentage will pick up as the day progresses. He said so far no major incident of violence has been reported from anywhere in the country.

The spokesman said that in Assam, snatching of ballot papers were reported in one or two polling stations. He said the commission is inquiring into the matter. Referring to those constituencies where prominent personalities are in the fray, the spokesman said polling is by and large peaceful there.

Today's polling covers all the Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Delhi, Andaman and Nicabar Islands, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, and Pondicherry. Polling is being held for 21 of the 42 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 17 of 28 in Karnataka, 15 of 25 in Rajasthan, and 25 out of 39 in Tamil Nadu. Election is also taking place for 122 of the 126 assembly seats in Assam, all the 90 constituencies in Haryana, 140 in Kerala, 30 Pondicherry and 149 out of 234 seats in Tamil Nadu. Polling to four assembly constituencies in Assam has been countermanded because of the death of some candidates.

Prominent leaders whose political future will be decided in today's polling include the Congress president, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao; the Samata Party leader, Mr. Devi Lal; the BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] leader, Mr. Kanshi Ram; and the Janata Party President, Dr. Subramaniam Swamy; and the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leader, Mr. Jaswant Singh. Notable candidates for assembly polls include the Congress chief ministers of Haryana, Kerala, and Assam — Mr. Bhajan Lal, Mr. A.K. Antony, and Mr. B.B. Burman. The Haryana Vikas Party chief, Mr. Bansilal; the Samata Party leader, Mr O.P. Chautala; and the Asom Gana Parishad leader, Mr. P.K. Mohanta; are the others.

In the capital territory of Delhi, over 25 percent polling has been reported till 1300. A team of correspondents, which went round the polling booths in different constituencies, reports that the voting which started on a dull note picked up as the day advanced. Here is a report from Sebastian Roberts:

[Begin recording] Unlike the last election, voting began on a low-key this morning in the capital, and by noon only 20 percent have cast their ballots. But the trend has changed later with queues lengthening in places like east Delhi. I can also say voting picking up in New Delhi constituency, which has polled 30 percent by now. The prestigious constituency known for sending political heavyweights to parliament seems to be hitting for brisk finish. This is Sebastian Roberts reporting from polling station 19, New Delhi constituency. [end recording]

In Andhra Pradesh, polling began amidst tight security. In Nandyal constituency, where the prime minister is contesting, polling started on a dull note but picked up gradually. The returning officer told our correspondent that polling was suspended at Chittakuntha village where a bomb was thrown. No one was injured in the incident.

In Kerala, moderate to heavy polling is recorded. Our Trivandrum correspondent Madhusudan Verma reports:

[Begin recording] [Words indistinct] about 40 percent polling has been recorded so far. Voter turnout was heavy in the coastal belt and plantation areas. Among the districts, Cannanore registered the highest percentage of 43, followed by Ernakulam 40 percent. Alleppey District, which is witnessing a number of prestige fights, has also recorded heavy turnout of voters. This is Madhusudan Verma from Thiruvananthapuram. [end recording]

In Tamil Nadu, about 20 to 35 percent polling was reported till noon. A section of villagers in Ramanathpuram and (Persuvaramutthu-Ramalingatheval) District are reported to be boycotting the election demanding special facilities for casting their votes.

In Pondicherry, about 30 percent of votes were cast till noon. Nettapakkam, a rural constituency, where the chief minister, Mr. V. Vaithilingam, is contesting, recorded a highest polling of 40 percent.

In Karnataka, brisk polling has been reported. We have a report from our Bangalore correspondent:

[Begin recording] Polling started on a dull note in urban areas. Women in rural areas of Mandya and Kanakapura constituencies rushed to polling booths before proceeding to fields for agricultural operations. Polling in urban area gathering momentum by noon. Polling has been peaceful, however, in Danagur village of Malawalli assembly segment in Kanakapura Lok Sabha seat, minor incident of stone throwing between two political groups was reported. In some villages of Chamarajanagar reserve seat — Chamanahalli, Chettahalli, and Kanchanahalli in Mysore Lok Sabha seat — people did not vote protesting that civic amenities like drinking water and electricity have not been maintained. The central poll observers are going round the constituencies to keep a close watch of smooth conduct of peaceful elections. This is K.R. Prahlad reporting from Bangalore. [end recording]

In Assam, 40 to 45 votes were polled till midday. The polling is reported to be heavy in most of the rural areas while it is moderate in the urban areas. Our Guwahati correspondent reports that in Barak Valley, polling at three centers in Katlichara assembly constituency, two in Silchar constituency, and one in Sanai constituency in Barak Valley. [sentence as heard] This has been referred to the Election Commission for the decision.

In Rajasthan, the polling in 15 parliamentary constituencies is going on peacefully. According to state election department, 15 percent polling was recorded in the first three hours. Our Jaipur correspondent who visited some of the polling booths in Sikar constituency reports that about 20 to 25 percent was reported up to 1100.

India: 'Moderate,' 'Peaceful' First Election Round Reported

BK2704160796 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] A moderate and peaceful polling has been reported in the first phase of elections for 150 Lok Sabha and 531 [state] assembly seats spread over 14 states and union territories. About 50 to 55 percent people cast their votes.

Briefing newsmen, the spokesman of the Election Commission said in New Delhi today that, barring some minor incidents of snatching of ballot boxes in some polling stations in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Haryana, the process went on smoothly. But a bomb exploded in Narasingarayapet in Andhra Pradesh in which four people were injured, and there was firing by police at Adampur in Haryana. He said that complaints have been received from about 45 police stations from all over the country. He said further information is awaited, and a decision about repoll will be taken soon. Giving details is AIR correspondent M.P. Radhakrishnan:

[Begin recording] A reasonably good turnout today belied apprehensions that voter awareness might be low this time because of subdued campaigning. The strict control enforced by the Election Commission on expenditure had put the political parties in a tight spot. But seeing the enthusiasm of the voters, it seems they have welcomed the new pattern of fighting elections. Though a clear picture will emerge only later tonight, the day's turnout may be slightly lower than the overall percentage of the 1991 elections when over 60 percent voters had exercised their franchise. The maturity of the electorate was also evident as the polling went through by and large peacefully. As in the last elections, the union territory of Lakshadweep, the smallest Lok Sabha constituency, recorded the highest turnout of over 87 percent. Incidentally, in the biggest Lok Sabha constituency, outer Delhi in the capital, polling was below 50 percent. [end recording]

Today's polling covered all the Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Island, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. Polling was held for 21 of the 42 seats from Andhra Pradesh, 17 of 28 from Karnataka, 15 of 25 from Rajasthan, and 25 out of 39 from Tamil Nadu. Polling also took place for 122 of the 126 assembly seats in Assam, all the 90 constituencies in Haryana, 140 in Kerala, 30 in Pondicherry, and 149 out of 234 seats in Tamil Nadu. [passage omitted]

India: Latest Reports Record 60 to 65 Percent Voter Turnout

BK2804083396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Latest reports indicate an estimated 60 to 65 percent of the over 16 crore electorate cast their ballot in the first phase of polling yesterday. Polling was held for 150 Lok Sabha and 531 assembly constituencies in 14 states and union territories. Lakshadweep topped the polling percentage with 87; Chandigarh came second with 85 percent. All the southern states reported more than 60 percent .polling except Karnataka where it was 50. The voter turnout was 65 percent in Kerala and 60 percent in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu; 70 percent polling was reported in Pondicherry. Assam also recorded a 70 percent voter turnout; 65 percent polling was reported in Haryana, while it was 60 in Himachal Pradesh. Rajasthan recorded an estimated 45 to 50 percent. Punjab recorded 57 percent polling, while in

Delhi it was 53. In Port Blair, nearly 61 percent of voters exercised their right of franchise for the lone parliamentary seat in the Andaman and Nicabar Islands. Car Nicobar Island registered a highest turnout of voters where 85 percent people cast their votes.

In Andhra Pradesh, a repoll will be conducted in eight polling centers of Nandyal constituency. Nine polling centers will have repolling in the Kurnool Lok Sabha constituency. The repoll will be held on the 30th of this month.

In Rajasthan, repolling has been ordered in five polling stations following complaints of booth capturing and snatching of ballot papers. The booths include two each in Bikaner and Nagore constituencies and one in Sikar constituency. Repolling will take place on the 30th of this month. Fresh poll has been ordered in the Nowgong assembly constituency in Assam following a mistake in the printing of the symbol of an independent candidate.

Barring a few incidents of violence, the first phase of polling was peaceful. Bombs were hurled in three places, and two activists of the Progressive Organization of Women were arrested for tearing ballot papers in the Nandyal constituency. In Chandigarh, one person was killed and 18 injured in the poll-related violence. Firing took place among two groups in the Gharonda assembly constituency. In Karnataka, one person sustained injuries in group clashes in the Kanakpura constituency.

India: Air Force MiG-21 Fleet To Undergo Upgrade

BK2604145296 Delhi INDIA TODAY in English
30 Apr 96 p 129

[Report by Avirook Sen]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] When the Soviet-built MiG-21s were first inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) in 1963, they were high-altitude interceptors par excellence. Over the years, the Soviets sold India improved variants (the last one being the MiG-21 BIS version in 1976), giving them the status of the IAF'S frontline fighter. In the '80s, the French-made Mirage 2000s and the Soviet-built MiG-29s donned that mantle. Yet with over 350 MiG-21s in service, or half the total fleet, these aircraft still form the backbone of the IAF. Replacing them with a more advanced aircraft would be a costly exercise, involving over Rs [rupees] 10,000 crore. Strapped for cash, the IAF last month took the more economical option.

It signed a Rs 1,200 crore deal with MiG MAPO (Moscow Aircraft Production Organisation), the Russian makers of the MiG, for upgrading 125 of the MiG-21 BIS. The improved aircraft will retain the MiG-21 BIS airframe and its turbojet engine, but will be equipped with the most advanced Russian airborne radar and air-launched missiles.

"The main area where we needed improvement is avionics, so we had to incorporate a next generation radar into the aircraft," says former air chief marshal S.K. Kaul, who, before he retired in December last year, was in favour of the upgraded option. What MiG MAPO has agreed to give is the Phazotron Kopyo Radar, an improved version of the Zhul radar installed in the MiG-29 fighters. With a detection range of about 45 km, it is comparable to systems installed even in the Mirage 2000-5 fighter that Pakistan is set to acquire. And its 'look up, look down' facility will now help it intercept airborne targets flying at any height between 30m [meters] and 20,000m.

There are other advantages that the radar would give the MiG-21-93, as the latest version is being called. The BIS version is equipped with close combat missiles. But with the new radar in place, the MiG-21-93 will have missiles that have "beyond visual range capability". Currently, the MiG-21s' primary responsibility is air defence — scrambling intruders and escorting friendly aircraft — but these additional features, according to Kaul, give the MiG-21-93 pilot "a much better chance if called upon in combat".

Defence experts say the upgrade programme should have begun sooner. According to estimates, the IAF'S 700-strong fighter force would be about 150 aircraft short over the next 10 years. With capital outlays for the IAF hovering between Rs 2,000 crore and Rs 2,500 crore per annum, buying new fighters to replace the MiGs would take a huge chunk out of the budget. The cheapest alternative, if available, is the American F-16C, which comes at a princely $32 million (Rs 100 crore). The cost of each upgraded MiG-21-93 aircraft is about Rs 10 crore. As Air Commodore (retd) Jasjit Singh, director of the Delhi-based Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, says: "The upgrade programme was as much an economic imperative as a strategic one."

The MiG-21-93s are likely to be inducted by the end of 1998 and are expected to hold out till the indigenously built Light Combat Aircraft, whose delivery has been delayed, finally arrives. However, with Pakistan planning to acquire the Mirage 2000-5, the IAF would still have to get a state-of-the-art aircraft to match it. India is now negotiating with Russia for the purchase of 40 Sukhoi Su-30 that compare in performance to the Mirage. So, despite the upgrade, the IAF may be forced to fork out more money if it has to retain the edge.

Iran

Iran: Emami-Kashani Sermon on Hajj, Muslim Leaders, U.S. 'Plots'

LD2604122696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Provincial Network in Persian 0800 GMT 26 Apr 96

[Tehran Friday prayers sermon delivered by Ayatollah Emami-Kashani, member of the Guardian Council—live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful. [passage omitted]

We have all heard the important and comprehensive message of the great leader of the revolution [Khamene'i] on the radio and television. This message included principles and issues that we do not have time to do justice to now. [passage omitted]

The enemy is wide awake. Plots are being hatched to create division and sow ignorance among the ummah of Islam, to bring about doubt and hesitation using the hand of those who write for money, impure tongues, pens, and thoughts. As a result, Muslims have ended up in this predicament today. It has resulted in so much misery. As his excellency mentioned, we are witnessing so much misery in Palestine, Lebanon, Bosnia, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and here and there in Islamic countries, which is the evidence of the crimes of the world's oppressors. Its key and leadership is in the White House. [passage omitted]

We cannot say that the hajj is merely a religious duty, nor can we say that it is merely a political duty. No, it is both religious and political. These are the exact words of the honorable prophet. He has said that hajj, and the lands of Mina and 'Arafat, are places for paying respect and bowing to God, and at the same time, they are places for the creation of an epic, great energy, and excitement for Muslims in respect of their duties toward each other and against blasphemy. That is the reality of Islam.

Today, we see what is happening in Lebanon and Palestine. Today, we see what disasters the enemies of Islam, and Israel — a cancerous bestial tumor, with its filthy and ugly identity, with its false identity, with its misery and misfortune — supported by the bullying government of America, are creating for the people of Lebanon. [crowd chants: "Death to America! Death to Israel!" among other slogans]

Men, women, young and old, defended and defenseless, they are all mowed down. Then the White House shouts: We shall provide our support, even if it means using the atomic bomb; we are prepared. It is as if America has forgotten the disgrace of Vietnam. Today, Lebanese officials and some other world officials say that America's involvement in Vietnam is now the same as its involvement in Lebanon. We hope that the power of the Almighty will strike them and their filthy arm, Israel, down here and now.

I mentioned some time ago that the downfall of the White House and America will be brought about because of their support for Israel. The American nation seems really to be asleep. Why do the people of America allow so much disgrace to be brought upon them, so much misfortune — why do they allow it? There are more than 1 billion Muslims in the world. How can he [America] shout so in Lebanon? Can it be for any reason other than that Muslims are preoccupied with themselves? Can it be for any reason but that the majority of Muslims are drowning in their own lives of pleasure and feasting. It is extremely unfortunate that those who rule over them are mostly not paying attention. If they had paid attention, we would not have ended up with days like these. If they had paid attention, there would not be so much drunken behavior. How long are we going to remain in this stupor? How long is Islam to remain isolated? [passage omitted]

The Islamic Republic, its foreign minister, and the entire system are endeavoring, as far as they can and as far as is possible, to solve the problem of the Islamic ummah and Muslims. The Islamic Republic calls for the independence of Muslims. It says that each country should be respected within its own limits and rights. That is what the Islamic Republic is calling for, and at the same time — as the eminent leader of the revolution [Khamene'i] stated — they [the enemies] utter so many accusations, blame, and lies against the Islamic Republic. What they say against the Islamic Republic, in fact they deserve for themselves. [passage omitted]

Iran: Commerce Minister Meets With Jordanian Counterpart

LD2804175896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Mr. [Yahya] ol-Eshaq, minister of commerce, today met the Jordanian trade minister on the sidelines of UNCTAD [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development] meeting.

Referring to the common cultural ground between the two countries, al-Eshaq emphasized the boosting of cooperation especially at chamber of commerce level and the holding of a joint exhibition.

The Central News Unit reports that the Jordanian trade minister also described as successful the holding of Iran's exhibition in Amman and hoped that Jordan would have an active presence at Tehran's international fair.

Iran: Intelligence Sources Say Iran Supplying Arms to Hizballah

MS2604115696 London THE TIMES in English 26 Apr 96 p 15

[Report by Michael Evans: "Iranians 'Sending Arms Into Lebanon'"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Iran has been sending regular shipments of arms to Hizballah in Lebanon via Syria in the past few weeks, Western intelligence sources say.

Arms deliveries, including Katyusha launchers and rockets, mines and explosives, have been arriving at Syrian civilian and military airfields before being transported by lorry through the Lebanese Bekaa Valley. One arms shipment was delivered by this route on April 14. The sources suspect some arms shipments have been disguised as humanitarian aid for Lebanon. Consignments are also believed to have been concealed in containers and delivered by ship through the Suez Canal. Turkey has also served unwittingly as a land transit point for large quantities of weapons for Hizballah. A consignment was found accidentally at a Syrian frontier post in January.

There were reports last year that the Iranian Revolutionary Guards had been pushing for a direct air link between Tehran and Beirut to bypass Damascus. However, the Lebanese Government had banned direct flights from Tehran because of the fear of arms smuggling.

Last month, an Iranian vessel was apprehended at Antwerp in Belgium with a concealed cargo of explosives. The vessel was bound for Germany where Tehran's intelligence services are known to have a European base.

Iran continues to deny all reports that it is funding and arming Hizballah.

Iran: Daily on Combating Turkish-Israeli Accord

NC2604142096 Tehran SALAM in Persian 14 Apr 96 pp 12, 4

[Political commentary: "The Zionist regime in the Vicinity of our Borders!"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A wave of reports and reactions by the media and public opinion in the Middle East against the presence of the Zionist regime in the strategic and vital region of the Persian Gulf — in which the coastal and maritime borders of Islamic Iran with the international waters are situated — have occupied the international news headlines.

In conjunction with those reports, the northwestern and western borders of Iran, northern Syria and Iraq were shocked by the announcement of the official presence of the Zionist regime's soldiers and airplanes in Turkish airspace in the furthermost Western areas of the region known as the Middle East, that is, in Western Asia.

The Zionists do not need the Turkish airspace for their flights. The fact is that when they have become pessimistic about their illegitimate infiltration in Syria and Lebanon, they decided to thrust their sword between these two Muslim countries in order to cross the Mediterranean via Turkey.

Meanwhile, in his interview, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Robert Pelletreau announced that contacts were being made between Algerian and Zionist regime officials as an outcome of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference.

In reviewing the official and overt onslaught of the Zionists in Islamic countries, and more importantly its geographical proximity to Islamic Iran — which has the constant and direct support of the absolutely domineering United States — it would not be inappropriate if we were to mention the contradictory reaction by our country and the region regarding the latest moves of the Zionists and their supporters.

When Shim'on Peres, the prime minister of the Zionist regime stepped on the soil of Oman and Qatar — Iran's Muslim neighbors in the Persian Gulf — our foreign ministry immediately displayed a timely and appropriate reaction by adopting a stance and making diplomatic moves. These moves would certainly assist in the enlightening and awakening of Muslim public opinion in the Islamic countries, especially of the region affected by the daily- proliferating danger of the Zionists.

The sensitivity of this reaction and approach assumes greater importance if we take into account the fact that Oman and Qatar are considered to be closer to us than other countries in the region in the past few years. Hence, our country's reaction clearly indicates the sense of danger of the proximity of the Zionist regime to our shores and to the Persian Gulf among the relevant officials in our country. [passage omitted]

On the other hand, the announcement of a security pact that is in fact a strategic alliance with Zionism and "Pan-Turkism" [preceding word in Persian transliteration of English] as two racist concepts between the common secular regime and the Zionist regime against the sensitive security interests of the Middle Eastern countries, in particular, of Iran, Syria, and Iraq clearly indicates a serious danger to our Western borders.

In view of the contradictory rebuttals of the Turks that were delivered in a defensive and groveling manner, our foreign minister contented himself with a mere expression of regret. It is not known how these purely diplomatic remarks that lacked necessary forcefulness will be able to safeguard the national security and interests as well as the gains of the Islamic Revolution.

The Zionist airplanes use of Turkish airspace is an overt and official aggression of the Islamic Republic of Iran's western and northwestern boundaries and the Zionist regime continues to harp on attacking sensitive Iranian installations such as the Bushehr and Neka' powerplants.

The Turks, like the militarists ruling Algeria, need extensive assistance from the United States and the Zionist regime in current circumstances. Hence, they have resorted to contradictory allegations as a result of the wave of reports and expressions of hatred by the public in the press and in the media and the utterances of the personalities of Islamic countries and governments.

This is a display in which those responsible will soon reap the consequences of their audacity from their people and the region in the not so distant future. Turkey, with its debts of $80 billion loaned by Western institutions and governments, an 80 percent rate of inflation and capital flight, its exorbitant, fruitless, and expensive competition in the Central Asian countries, unrest due to the Kurds, corruption in the Armed forces, especially among the police, will be transformed into another Algeria or Bahrain due to its misjudgment that cannot be prevented by all the NATO bases.

However, all the Islamic countries, especially those with borders with the occupied territories, that is Syria and Egypt, adopted categorical and clear positions and displayed their reactions on the unquestioned danger of their security from the Zionist regime due to the military and security accord with the Turks. In fact, today, in order to gain control of the land and water of Arab countries, Turkey has pinned its hopes on the Zionist regime and its American supporters!

The seepage of radioactive material from the concealed reactors in the Dimona desert and the pressure by the Zionists against the people and the resistance of the Palestinian combatants in the occupied territories as well as the Americans' desire for putting everything on the Zionists' plate were other reasons for the Arab countries' reactions. [passage omitted]

At a glance, the contradictions in the political and strategic conduct of countries that are affected by the presence of the Zionist regime in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf can be clearly perceived. In other words, they are oblivious to the depth of the catastrophe and danger of the criminal Zionists and aggressors against the Islamic countries in the region; that is, there is a lack of a unified strategy. Their minds are vacant with regard to strategic planning for the political security of all these countries from the danger that is growing near their ears like a cancerous tumor.

Now the time for consolidating all their resources against the Zionists has come. The tripartite committee of Iran, Syria, and Turkey no longer has any meaning and should give way to a committee of Iran, Syria, and Iraq in the region against the Zionists. Public opinion, national and public security interests, and common ideological values need to be in unison, God willing...

Iran: Editorial Says U.S. Gave 'Green Light' to Israeli Attacks

NC2604161196 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 17 Apr 96 p 15

[Editorial: "The United States Is an Accomplice in the Zionists' Crimes"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

"It is too early to halt the bombing on Lebanon." This astonishing remark was made by Shim'on Peres, the Zionist regime's prime minister, when insisting on the continuation of the Israeli crimes against Lebanon's cities and villages. He stressed that it was too early to stop these operations.

This came as the Zionist armed forces carried out 25 military sorties and plunged the cities and villages of Lebanon into blood and dust. These are the circumstances amid which Washington is seeking to justify Israel's crimes. The malevolent American Secretary of State Warren Christopher has made despicable remarks and given a green light to the Zionists for the massacre of the oppressed Lebanese people.

This is not the first time that the United States has given overt support for Zionist atrocities. However, this time the extent of the Israeli atrocities is so great that it was expected that the Washington officials would at least tone down their justification of the Israeli atrocities and would try not to be typecast as justifying Zionist crimes.

We must not forget that the retaliatory attacks by the Lebanese Hizballah against the Zionist usurpers fall within the framework of antioccupationist acts that cannot be denounced in the lexicon of nations or of international parlance, since this is an effort to safeguard independence, suppress the aggressors, and liberate their territories.

Hence, with its overt and covert support of the Zionists, the United States is "an accomplice" in Zionist crimes. Naturally, it should be dealt a teeth-shattering blow by the nations for this shameless audacity.

The important point is that Washington has adopted these shameful stances despite its claims of world leadership. The Washington power structure knows better than anyone else that the Zionists with their savage attacks on the civilian population of southern Lebanon and extending all over the country have initiated this new round of atrocities in order to extort more concessions. They are optimistic that by wresting away the initiative in southern Lebanon they will be able to pave the way for talks with Syria. In addition, Shim'on Peres is in a shaky position on the domestic front. On the one hand, he is being accused by Zionist hardliners of ineptitude and has repeatedly received threats against his life. Therefore, the main motivation for his criminal actions in Lebanon is that he wishes to convince the Zionist circles in occupied Palestine that he is a gory criminal whose savage nature they can rely on so they will support him in the upcoming elections. They should be assured that whenever conditions demand he will not hesitate to perpetrate atrocities, massacres, and domineering actions against the neighboring countries.

Accordingly, the coterie of Arab regimes that have bowed down in awe before the Zionists are now in a very difficult situation and are unable to justify their disgraceful stances to their people. [passage omitted]

What is important is that the West is keeping tacitly silent regarding all these misanthropic crimes. These governments that vie with one another in adopting stances or issuing denunciations whenever there is even a minor attack on the Zionists are now remaining silent instead of condemning these crimes against the independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon and the citizens of that country's various cities and villages. [passage omitted]

It is important for the nations to enter into the fray themselves, regardless of how and from where they do so. They should be as serious and effective in their reactions as they are able in confronting this unfortunate and intolerable state of affairs. They should rest assured that they are the only ones who can effectively act to end this imbroglio. If they do not act today, tomorrow will be too late.

Iran: Review of Plans To End Israeli Attacks on Lebanon

LD2604180496 Tehran ETTELA'AT in Persian 22 Apr 96

[Editorial by 'Abolqasem Qasemzadeh: "Haste to End Failure"; from the "Mourning for Lebanon" special supplement p 7]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On an order from Clinton, instead of accompanying him to Moscow for an important meeting between the G-7 and Russia, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher went to Damascus. At the end of his meeting with Hafiz al-Asad, in a news conference accompanied by Shim'on Peres, the Zionist regime's prime minister, who looked terrified, he [Christopher] displayed the failure of the plan to attack Lebanon. [passage omitted]

The presence of France and Italy on the scenes of the Middle East, particularly the views of France on Lebanon that are different from those of America, which intends to consolidate the hegemony of the Zionist regime throughout the region, has created a new political atmosphere with which neither the Zionist regime nor America is satisfied. Also, with the arrival of Russian Foreign Minister [Yevgeniy] Primakov, and his visit to Beirut, the U.S. political monopoly has been broken. [passage omitted]

What is quite clear in the current political atmosphere is that not only has Shim'on Peres not benefited at all from his tactic of attacking Lebanon, but he has also endangered his position in the forthcoming elections in occupied Palestine against the Likud Party, represented by Netanyahu. He has also placed himself against the Arab countries in the Middle East; and with his bestial killings in Lebanon, he has turned the word peace into a mockery. So much so that his friends such as King Husayn, Husni Mubarak, and even 'Arafat have not had the courage to display their support or to interfere in the present crisis.

Protests against 'Arafat and Peres have spread throughout the occupied territories, Cairo is on the verge of another explosion and King Husayn, who is still dreaming of seeing Iraq's disintegration — despite the fact that he has recalled his ambassador from Baghdad — has imposed very strict police control in Amman in order to stop any kind of demonstration by the people. Syria, too, intends to take advantage of the arrival of Europe and Russia on the political scene. The fact is that the haste to end failure is a proper phrase to describe Warren Christopher's activities. [passage omitted]

History will remember Hizballah as the liberation army of Lebanon.

Iran: Majles Speaker Says Cease-Fire 'Great Victory' for Lebanon

LD2804112796 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In an open session today, the Islamic Consultative Majles concluded the debate on a bill to ban smoking in public places. The bill was approved. According to a report by a Central News Unit correspondent, the bill, which carried a double-urgency priority and was debated and approved in the presence of the members of the Guardian Council, bans smoking in public places. [passage omitted]

At the start of today's open session Mr. 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, speaker of the Majles, congratulated everyone on the eve of the joyous feast of sacrifice. He hoped that the world's Muslims, especially the pilgrims to the House of God, would be inspired by the revitalizing message of the esteemed leader of the Islamic revolution and would fulfill the concept of hajj described in it. He also thanked and praised the representative of the leader and supervisor of the Iranian pilgrims and all the pilgrims who took part in the disavowal of infidels ceremonies in 'Arafat and thus performed their duty and mission in conveying their message to other Muslims.

He went on to say that the declaration and establishment of the cease-fire in Lebanon was a great victory for the people and Hizballah of Lebanon. He stated: The Zionist regime was defeated in this aggression and did not achieve any of its goals.

Iran: Radio Examines U.S. Policy Toward Iran

LD2704220896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 27 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bosnian Government, [on] Friday 26 April, rejected that hit squads trained by Iranians hunt down war criminal suspects, killing them afterwards. During the past few weeks the issue of Bosnia and Iran's role in that republic has turned into a major pretext to alter political equations in America's inner politics, especially when the Republicans are pressuring the Clinton administration for having given a green light to Iran during the Bosnian war to dispatch arms to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Political analysts believe U.S. political circles, especially the Republicans, in the face of Bosnian developments and Washington's stance toward such changes, are grappling with undeniable contradictions. The Republicans, while accusing the Clinton administration of showing Iran a green light to send arms to Bosnia during the Balkan crisis, support the lifting of the unilateral arms embargo imposed on Bosnia and have pressured the White House to put the decision into practice.

It goes without saying that a clear shift in the Republican stance and the outbreak of contradictions in the run-up to the U.S. elections, do not take place with no reason at all. The two Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. are making use of the ruling party's posturings toward Iran as a political ploy in the elections, so much so that even some U.S. political circles, dubbing it Irangate, try to make the most of the propaganda to knockout the ruling U.S. Administration.

Elsewhere, on the eve of elections in the U.S., instability in U.S. stances in Bosnia has further come to light, so much so that despite the fact that the U.S. Congress has authorized the dispatch of 20,000 forces to Bosnia-Herzegovina provided U.S. troops return home after their one-year mandate comes to an end, currently the White House, without taking the issue into account, has nullified the deadline set for the return of U.S. forces in order to clear the way for an extension in the presence of the forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina — an issue which has not escaped the attention of the Republicans, creating a new round of clashes in the electoral campaign. At any rate, all Washington's stances in foreign matters have been overshadowed by the spotlight cast on party rivalries. Therefore, establishment of security or maintaining peace in the strife-torn areas, including Bosnia, only take place in line with special interests and internal political considerations within the country and are hence unstable.

Iran: Riyadh Warned Against Making 'Provocative Statements'

LD2704114096 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 24 Apr 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Irano-Saudi Tension Will Make Enemies of Islam Happy"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] As usual, on the occasion of hajj pilgrimage, certain pieces of news are being aired from Saudi Arabia which serve nothing but to make the enemies of Islam happy.

The 17-year-old history of the Islamic Republic is an open book and may be read by all. Contrary to the disinformation campaign by U.S.-Zionist lobbyists and their entity, Israel, one can easily come to the conclusion that Iran was never involved in any form of terrorist activities.

To have friendly and closer relations with neighbours without interfering in their internal affairs along with mutual respect and interest are the key pillars of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic.

Despite all anti-Iran propaganda, the Zionists could not produce even a single evidence in support of their repeated claims that Iran was involved in terrorism.

True, Iran draws a line between a genuine struggle for the liberation of one's homeland or to achieve one's usurped rights and killing of innocent people in order to achieve one's illegitimate rights.

The 17-year-old history of the Islamic Republic also proves that Iran was with justice, right and equity even at the cost of its own national interest.

Iran's full support to the Palestinians for the liberation of their homeland, its backing of the Lebanese struggle in the way of achieving their genuine right to regain their usurped lands in the South and very recently an all-out assistance to Bosnians are crystal clear examples of what Iran believes under the framework of Islam.

The Zionist media always try to pose Iran as a Shi'i country. Yes the majority of Iranians believe in the Shi'i school of Islam. Though in minority, but the followers of Sunni school of Islam and the people of other religions also live in Iran and enjoy their due rights in the Islamic Republic.

What we are trying to say is that Iran is a frontline advocator of Islam which asks all the Muslims to rise up against injustice, oppression and exploitation irrespective of caste, creed and belief.

The majority of the Palestinians are from the Sunni school of Islam and so are Bosnians. But the Islamic Republic was with them in their bloody struggle and will do so in the future for them and for others under similar circumstances because Islam asks us to do so.

We would like to draw the attention of our neighbours in Saudi Arabia to think twice before acting on the propaganda fuelled by the Zionists.

No-one in Iran would like to undermine Saudi Arabia's internal security or its regional or international interest. On the hajj affairs, Iranian and Saudi officials have met and discussed the issues time and again.

Iran, in no way, is interested to undermine the accord or accords both sides have reached. We wish that in case of any ambiguity or misunderstanding, the Saudi officials through diplomatic missions of both the countries will clear the dust rather than issuing provocative statements which definitely will make happy to the enemies of Islam, without any concrete results coming out of such an atmosphere.

Iran: Article Views Iraq, Oil Exports, UN Resolutions

LD2704152796 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 23 Apr 96 p 4

["Economic review" by Mahyar Emammi: "Iraq—Resumption of Limited Oil Exports"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Since the world community had done nothing when Iraq inva-ded Iran in September 1980 and used chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians in 1988, the "Arab hero" or Saddam Husayn, was encouraged to invade Kuwait in August 1990 to compensate Iraq's defeat by Iran and ensure an outlet to the sea.

In fact, during the eight-year imposed war on Iran, most countries were on Iraq's side, despite the fact that Iraq was the aggressor.

To Iraq's surprise, however, this time the world did not react as it had previously.

Shortly after the invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations adopted as many as 18 resolutions against the occupation. Of these, the most important were: Resolution 661 which imposed economic embargo on Iraq including oil exports; and Resolution 678, which approved "the use of all necessary means" against Iraq should it not withdraw from Kuwait by 15th January 1991. Thus the invasion of Kuwait led to a third Persian Gulf war since September 1980, but with more catastrophic results for the Iraqi people.

In the nearly six years since Iraqi forces crossed the border into Kuwait, Iraq has been out of the oil market as a result of UN sanctions. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Venezuela have made the biggest contributions to replacing exports lost in Iraq.

Before the 1990 occupation of Kuwait, Iraq's OPEC production quota was 3.14m [million] barrels per day, equal to that of Iran's. In recent years, a series of meetings between the UN and Iraq have been held on resuming limited oil exports, but so far Iraq could not agree to export oil on terms laid down by resolutions from the Security Council.

In the past, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been strangely opposed to Iraqi return to the market, demanding implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including the release of all Kuwait prisoners of war. As the recent rounds of talks between Iraq and United Nations were continuing in New York, hopes were rising in the oil community regarding the success of the talks.

According to Resolution 986, Iraq can export 2bn [billion] dollars worth of crude over a 180 day period, mainly through the pipeline from Iraq's northern fields to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. At current prices, Iraq would need to export between 600,000 to 700,000 barrels per day during six months to raise 2bn dollars in revenues. In recent years, Iraq had been pressing for larger volumes of crude exports to raise 2.4bn dollars in income, the right to export though the Persian Gulf as well as more relaxed terms on mechanisms regarding allocation and distribution of food and medicine for the Iraqi Kurds.

If Iraq agrees with resolution 986, the UN would take 300m dollars every six months, for humanitarian purchases for the Kurds of northern Iraq. Also, up to 30 per cent of the income is to be allocated for war reparations to Kuwait and UN efforts in Iraq. In addition, the United Nations will deduct about 2 dollars per barrel to finance import of spare parts and Equipment for Iraq's oil industry and export terminals.

Some Iraqi officials have objected to terms of UN Resolution 986, arguing that not much money will be left for Iraq following all the deductions. However, after Saddam's rise to power in July 1979, political decision-making has become limited to Saddam Husayn.

It is therefore believed that Saddam can only decide whether to accept or reject the UN Resolution 986 on resuming limited oil exports. Even if Iraq can agree with the UN to resume oil exports, any deal would require the approval of the Security Council. The prospect of an approval by the Security Council remains uncertain since USA and Britain, two permanent members and Iraq's main enemies, have veto powers in the Security Council.

Iran: EU Hailed for Not Bowing to U.S. Pressures in Luxembourg

LD2704120096 Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 24 Apr 96 p 2

[Article by S. Nawabzadeh under the "Viewpoint" column: "Europe Coming Into Its Own"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Battered and bruised by the Nazis, and then browbeaten to backstage after World War II by the upstart Americans, Europe it seems, is finally coming into its own. One indication of this rediscovery of the self, after those long "cold" post-war decades when Washington virtually viewed the continent as its colony, was the firmness shown over the past few days by the 15 member states of the European Union (EU), to chart out their own independent course in the tricky world of "Realpolitik".

At Luxembourg on Monday [22 April], the EU foreign ministers refused to bow to U.S. pressures on such issues as ties with Cuba, Iran and Libya, to the crisis in Lebanon, where Uncle Sam wants to act as both the captain of the Zionist team in action, and as a referee.

Contrast this ignorant attitude with the understanding shown by the French and the Italians, or for instance with that of the Russians, whose views on Lebanon found listeners in Beirut and Damascus.

For Islamic Iran, which supports peace and stability, and is a firm opponent of terrorism in any form - state-sponsored or otherwise - the developments in Europe were encouraging signs. The chairperson of the Luxembourg meet, Italian Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli, showed a clear understanding of Israeli lawlessness when she implied [as received] of the biased approach of the U.S. plan, and said that any solution which is not lasting is not a solution at all.

We also certainly admire the way the European States objected to the economic terrorism of the U.S. to prosecute foreign companies doing trade with Cuba, by saying that they would lodge a complaint with the World Trade Organization, as well as the way they spurned Washington's delirious "schoolboy" pleas (Mama don't talk to "bad boy" Iran)!

Why is the U.S. so scared of a dialogue between Europe and Iran? The answer is obvious. Europe has had traditional relations with Iran and the rest of the Muslim world, sharing ideas and benefiting immensely. Remember, the Renaissance would not have occurred if the works of Iran's Islamic scientists and philosophers (Rhazes and Avicenna for example), had not been translated into Latin.

Of course, the ties have been two-way. Today also, the Islamic Republic of Iran with its independent policy has much to offer to Europe in economy and other fields, at a time when the U.S.-Zionist tentacles are firmly tightening around the energy sources of the Arab world. Plus, as seats of old world civilizations, there are ideas to be shared.

Therefore, a dialogue is necessary for an orderly world. We prefer talking, and have been talking in quite clear and unambiguous terms over a host of issues ever since the Islamic revolution gave us an eloquent voice. And if our words were not heeded, it was surely not our fault but the deafening din of the U.S.-Zionist media which made Europeans act erratically at times. Note: We have even had inter-religious dialogues with the Orthodox and Catholic Christians of Europe, removing many misconceptions about the dynamism of the shari'ah.

However, the EU should act with caution so as not to ruin this atmosphere of understanding, which American proxies are scheming to wreck. The meek voice of dissent at Luxembourg towards French FM Herve de Charette's efforts was from the British FM Malcolm Rifkind, who struttingly spoke in favour of the U.S.

Was it jealousy of the French or servile attitude towards the Americans? Anyhow, old habits die hard.

Iran: Interior Ministry Official on Refugee Issues

LD2704185496 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 27 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Islamic Republic of Iran ranks among the top countries accepting refugees, with 2.5 million migrants and refugees in Iran. Announcing this information in an interview with reporters this morning, Mr. [Ahmad] Hoseyni, adviser to the interior minister and director-general in charge of the affairs of foreign nationals and refugees, added: In keeping with the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy to limit the number of new refugees and to encourage the voluntary return of refugees, 1.3 million Afghans have returned to their country so far. However, regarding Iraqi migrants and refugees, in view of the conditions in that country, only 4,000 Iraqis have returned home via northern regions.

He added: All the green cards relating to Iraqi refugees and the blue cards relating to Afghan refugees will no longer be valid after 1376 [Iranian year beginning 21 March 1997] and temporary residence permits will be issued instead for all foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hoseyni announced that 250,000 Afghan refugees are to return to northern Afghanistan via Turkmenistan and called on those wishing to return home by this route to report, for registration and repatriation, to foreign nationals' affairs offices in provinces and districts. If refugees do not complete this process, they will not receive cash and assistance in kind from the United Nations or the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Interior Ministry official explained that, with UN agreement, the cash quota given to refugees would be paid in dollars this year and said: The sum of 25 dollars plus 50 kg of wheat will be given to every volunteer wishing to return and people who do not take part in the repatriation program will be transferred to camps and not be allowed to live in towns.

Referring to illegal marriages by foreign nationals to Iranian women, he warned Iranian families [as heard] not to marry foreign men, especially Afghans, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis, under any circumstances, without the permission of the Interior Ministry.

Iran: Taleban Delegation Urged To Give Up 'Military Strategy'

LD2704115096 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 23 Apr 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Taleban Delegation Welcome; Negotiation the Only Path to Peace in Afghanistan"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Since the inception of the Taleban in Afghanistan this is the first time a delegation of the group visits Iran. The visit is welcomed because it will help gain a closer exchange of views between Taleban, a warring party in Afghanistan, and Iran, a reliable and successful mediator.

However, what the Taleban should bear in mind is that, first of all, it is not possible to restore peace to war-torn Afghanistan by means of guns. Secondly, Taleban leaders are sharp enough to have grasped the fact that no group can assume an indisputable leadership in Afghanistan. Hence, they should bid farewell to their military strategy to prove their goodwill and to gain the confidence of other influential Afghan groups.

Since the withdrawal of the former Soviet army from Afghanistan, various groups have tried to assume the indisputable leadership of the country. Practically, all of them have failed.

National consensus is the only way to peace in Afghanistan. Every group should realize its limitations. Stretching one's leg beyond the limit is one of the main causes of the prolongation of civil war in that country.

Getting orders from beyond the borders is neither in Taleban's interests nor in Afghanistan's interests. Certain countries, regional as well as infra-regional [as received], are after their own interests, even at the cost of protracting the feud in Afghanistan through pitting one group against another. It is the duty of Afghan groups not to yield to the demands of foreigners for short-term gains.

On the one hand, Taleban should trust the Islamic Republic of Iran as a reliable mediator; on the other hand, they should gain the trust of other Afghan factions.

In short, the only path to peace in Afghanistan is a national consensus achievable only through peaceful negotiation. Without heeding foreign pressure, the Taleban and other Afghan groups should stick to this point if they are serious in restoring peace to their homeland.

Peace in Afghanistan will prepare the ground for the promotion of regional cooperation. The only losers in this game will be foreigners who try to catch fish in troubled waters.

Nepal & Bhutan

Nepal: Prime Minister Returns From Visits to PRC, Thailand

BK2904021196 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 27 Apr 96

[Report by a "POST reporter" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, April 26 — Prime Minister [PM] Sher Bahadur Deuba upon his arrival from the official goodwill visit to the People's Republic of China on Friday has claimed that the visit has been very fruitful, more than UML [United Marxist-Leninist] Prime Minister Adhikari's visit.

After completing a week-long visit to China and two days of informal visit to Thailand, Prime Minister Deuba arrived Kathmandu along with official delegation comprising ministers and members of parliament.

Addressing the media people gathered at the VVIP Lounge at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Prime Minister Deuba said that although being only a goodwill visit, it has been very successful, fruitful and marked deeper association with China. "We received a very warm hospitality in China," he added.

Deuba said the three agreements signed between China and Nepal were a symbol of success of the visit. The agreement signed at Beijing on April 18 include two treaties and an exchange of notes on forming a Sino-Nepalese Non-governmental Cooperation Forum. Two other treaties are an economic and technical cooperation and a treaty on establishing a consultation system between the two foreign ministries.

Under the economic cooperation, China has provided 80 million Rinminbi Yuan (equivalent to Rs. [rupees] 56 crore). China has also provided 30 million Rinminbi (equivalent to Rs. 21 crore) for the construction of a temple at Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha.

Replying a query on the absence of opposition party's representation in the delegation, Deuba said that he had invited the opposition parties but they didn't show any interest.

Deuba also said that he has furthered the traditional relation so happily subsisting between the two old friends. "The relation between these two countries have further deepened and nurtured with this visit," Deuba added.

In another question, PM said that he had not gone to China expecting grant or aid. "We had gone with the main objective of improving trade and economic relations, and invite investments in Nepal, in which we have achieved a great success," Deuba said.

Prime Minister Deuba said that the Sino-Nepalese Non-governmental Cooperation Forum would work to facilitate trade relations, and improve relations in non-governmental level.

After completing official visit to China, Prime Minister Deuba spent two informal days in Thailand. Replying a query on the achievement of Thailand visit, Prime Minister Deuba said that he could only meet the acting PM of Thailand as PM was out of the country.

"Thailand is a very important country in South East Asia, and we held talks on improving economic co-operation between the two countries," Deuba said and added that a Thai-delegation is coming soon to Nepal for further talks.

Earlier upon his arrival, Prime Minister Deuba was received at TIA by Minister for Communications Chiranjibi Wagle. The PM was also presented a guard of honour by an army platoon.

Interestingly, Nepalese Congress President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai arrived at TIA to receive Deuba when the PM was preparing to leave the airport.

Nepal: Outcome of Prime Minister's PRC Visit Viewed

BK2904025596 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 27 Apr 96

[Report by Prateek Pradhan — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, April 26 — No sooner Prime Minister [PM] Deuba finished talks with Chinese Premier Li Peng and President Jiang Zemin, a 56 crore question sprang up in the Nepalese intellectual circle, that was whether the visit was successful or not.

The 56 crore grant (equivalent to 80 million Riminbi Yuan) offered by the Chinese Government played a pivotal role for the discussion. A group argued that since PM Deuba has managed to bring exactly the same amount — which though is more in Nepalese currency due to current exchange rate — as the former communist prime minister had brought from the world's biggest communist country, the visit was successful. The other group argued that since the coalition leader could not bring more, and since Nepal was compelled to mention its version on Tibet and Taiwan in the joint communique — for the first time — the visit was a flop.

Deuba, upon his arrival clarified that he had not visited China with the expectation of any grant or aid. He said he had gone for goodwill visit, and he had an aim to strengthen economic relations with China, which materialized too.

Deuba also claimed that his visit was more successful than his predecessor Manmohan Adhikari. He said he was not treated anything less than his predecessor, and furthermore, he successfully signed three agreements with China.

It seems that Deuba has achieved more than he expected in the China visit. Before leaving for China, the Nepalese team were expecting to bring about 40-45 crore aid and just a goodwill gesture from China. But, the warm reception offered by China and materlization of three faintly expected agreements have encouraged Nepalese team.

Before the visit, Prime Minister Deuba had speculated the visit to the immediate northern neighbour only as a goodwill visit, which post-democracy prime ministers have made a routine, to balance their visit of southern neighbour.

On China's part, it took a very calculative move. The tight- lipped Chinese officials and ministers proved that China just wants to maintain good relations with Nepal, and they don't have any special affection or hatred toward Nepal.

Providing the same amount it had provided to the communist government, exactly one year ago — China tacitly declared that it is not closer to any political parties. China also proved that it just wants to remain a good friend irrespective of political system and governing parties in Nepal.

However, except for nominal grant aid, China did not provide anything but a platform for Nepal to reap the harvest from China's success with its own effort. The exchange of notes on forming non-governmental cooperation forum and the treaty on establishing a consultation system between two foreign ministers are nothing but the platform for Nepal to take benefit from China. Nepal can't just achieve the benefit through these platforms if it doesn't work hard for itself.

Following the tete-a-tete between Nepalese PM and his Chinese counterpart on April 18, Prime Minister Deuba himself commented that a very good, Nepalese side looked recharged. Prime Minister Deuba himself commented the visit as a landmark achievement in the traditional friendship between Nepal and China.

It is obvious that if Nepal follows up successfully, it can really achieve more from the fastest growing economy of the world. But, we should be clear that China is no more going to provide off-hand assistance just for the sake of expanding its influence and to balance the regional power.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Powerful Bomb Kills 37, Injures Dozens on Bus in Lahore

BK2804103896 Hong Kong AFP in English 1007 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] LAHORE, Pakistan, April 28—At least 37 people were killed and dozens injured Sunday [28 April] as a powerful bomb exploded in a passenger bus near Lahore, capital of Pakistan's populous Punjab province, police said.

The bus heading for Pattoki, 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of here, was crowded with passengers going home to celebrate the three—day Muslim festival of Eid ul Azha, which begins in Pakistan on Monday.

The bomb was planted in the rear of the bus just above its diesel tank, a police official said. "It went off with a big bang," officials said.

Police officials said the blast occurred when the vehicle reached Bhai Phero, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Lahore.

It triggered fire and the vehicle was "totally gutted." Police said 37 bodies had been counted and the final toll was expected to rise.

"It is sheer terrorism," a police official said.

A bomb disposal unit and a team of experts rushed to the scene, and an investigation has been ordered, officials said.

Pakistan: Further on Bus Bombing in Lahore

BK2804111796 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] About 20 persons were killed and many others were wounded when a high intensity bomb exploded in Pathoki bound passenger bus near Phoolnagar, some 50 kms from Lahore this afternoon. The explosive device was planted in the petrol tank of the bus, which had started from the Badamibagh bus stand, Lahore. However, according to the PPI, the number of deaths is greater.

The acting president, Mr. Wasim Sajjad, has condemned the blast and termed it as a dastardly act. He has called upon the provincial administration to spare no efforts in tracing out the culprits. He has also expressed sorrow over the loss of valuable lives and prayed for the departed souls.

Pakistan: Bhutto Condemns Bus Bombing; Death Toll Over 50

BK2804135896 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 28 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] More than 50 people were killed when a bomb exploded in a passenger bus near Pathoki, 52 kms from Lahore. [passage omitted]

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has expressed shock and grief over the loss of invaluable lives in the bomb explosion. In a statement, the prime minister condemned in the most strongest terms this dastardly act and said the fact that the terrorists chose the auspicious occasion of 'Id al-Adha for committing such a heinous act showed they had no respect even for the most pious day of Islam. She said every right thinking person must abhor this cowardly act. The prime minister said the government will not compromise with terrorists and would fight them till the last of them is brought to book.

Acting president, Wasim Sajjad, has also condemned the bomb blast near Pathoki and termed it as a dastardly act which resulted in loss of life and property. The acting president called upon the provincial administration to spare no efforts in tracing out the culprits and awarding them deterrent punishment. Mr. Wasim Sajjad expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of innocent passengers and conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family members. He prayed to Almighty Allah to grant eternal peace to the departed soul and early recovery to those injured in this major bomb blast.

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